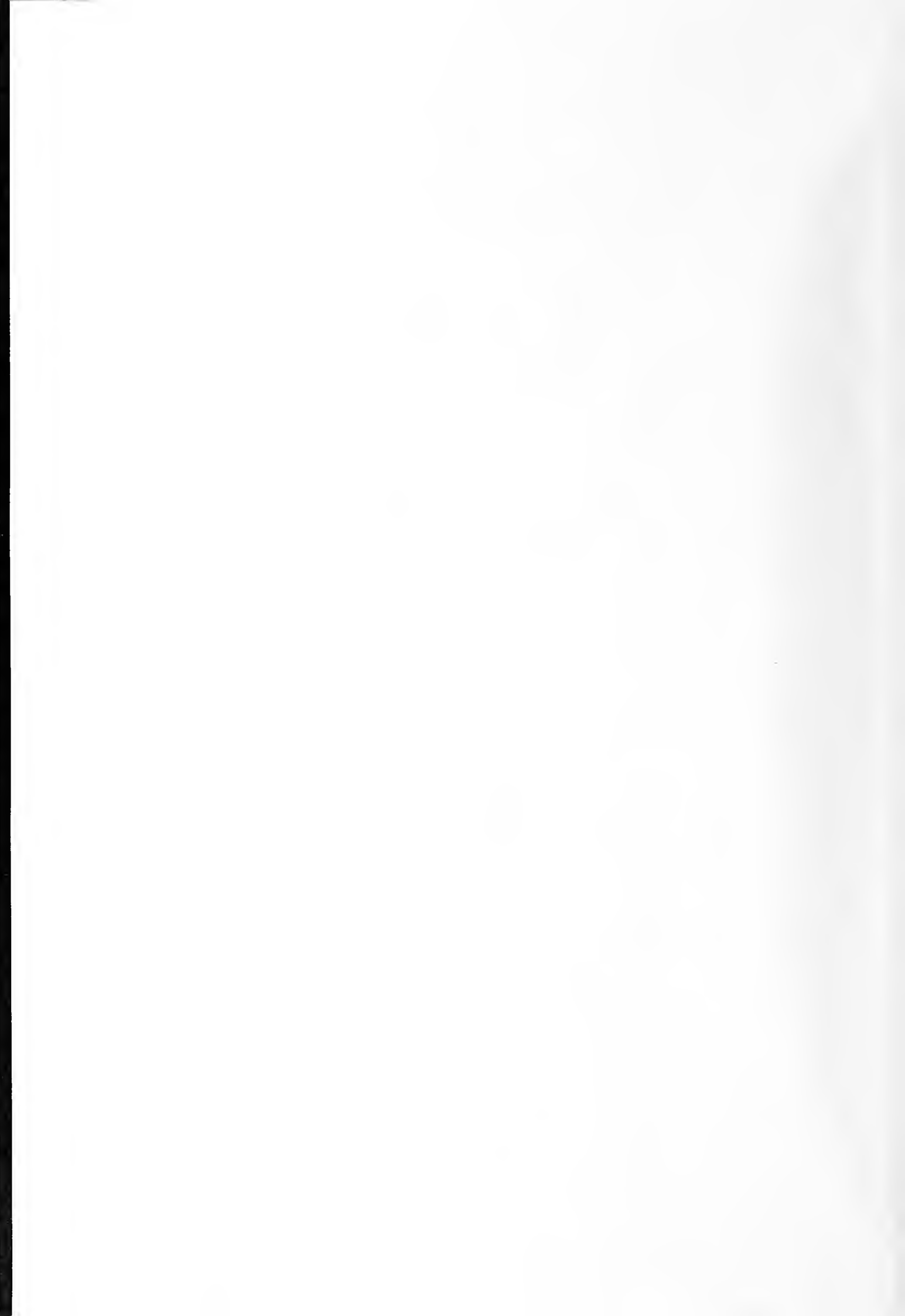




A Century in Crisis

Modernity and Tradition in the
Art of Twentieth-Century China

Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen



世紀的轉折： 二十世紀中國藝術中的傳統與現代性

A Century in Crisis

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Modernity and Tradition in the
Art of Twentieth-Century China

Century
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Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen

With essays by Jonathan Spence, Shan Guolin,
Christina Chu, Xue Yongnian, and Mayching Kao

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Catalogue numbers 1, 3, 5, 11, 16, 21, 23, 25, 27, 30, 33, 36, 41,
43, 45, 47, 49, 51, 52, 54, 59, 61, 62, 64, 66, 112, 126, 151, 117, 51,
154, 58, 160-63, 165-67, 169, 171, 172, 176, 181, 84, 188, 190, 191,
196, 200, 202, 203 + CIEA + China International Exhibition
Agency, 10 + 1922 Huang Binhong, 16 + 1933 Liu Kailong,
50 + 1940 Feng Zikai, 53 + 1948 Zheng Wuchang, 60 + 1960
Shen Yinmo, 63 + 1940s Chang Yu (Sanyu), 65 + 1998 Peng
Jian, 113, 18, 120, 25 + Pieker Art Gallery, Colgate University;
116 + 1959 He Tianjian, 159 + 1974 Shen Jiawei; 164 + 1976
Chan Danqing, 168 + 1979 Chen Yifei, 170 + Mao Lizi,
173 + 1972 Zhao Wujl, 171 + 1986 Lu Yanshao; 175 + 1986 Li
Kerlan, 177 + 1988 Wang Jiqian (C.C. Wang), 179 + 1996 Zhang
Hong, Arnold Chang; 180 + 1994 Li Huayi, 186 + 1983 Wu
Guangzhong, 193 + 1966 Liu Guosong, 195 + 1985 Liu Guosong,
191 + 1981 Zhao Chunxiang (Chao Chung Hsiang),
204 + 1987 Wang Dongling.

Guggenheim Museum Publications
1071 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10128

Hardcover editions distributed by
Harry N. Abrams, Inc.
100 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10011

ISBN (hardcover) 0-8109-6909-2

ISBN (softcover) 0-89207-211-3

Cover: Sun Zixi (b. 1929), *In Front of Tiananmen*, 1964.
Oil on canvas; 155 x 285 cm. Chinese National Art
Gallery, Beijing.

Consulting editor: Naomi Noble Richard

Design by Tsane Seymour Design, Inc., New York

Maps by Tom Suchan

Printed in Italy by Marirocros

A Century in Crisis

Curated by Julia F. Andrews and Kueyi Shen

Guggenheim Museum SoHo
February 6 - May 24, 1998

Guggenheim Museum Bilbao
July 17-October 15, 1998

China: 5,000 Years has been organized by the
Guggenheim Museum in collaboration with the
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China and the National Administration for Cultural
Heritage of the People's Republic of China,
China International Exhibition Agency and Art
Exhibitions China.

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Significant additional support has been provided by
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This exhibition has also been made possible in part
by a major grant from the National Endowment for
the Humanities, expanding America's understanding of
who we were, who we are, and who we will be.

This catalogue is supported by a grant from The Li-Ching
Cultural and Educational Foundation. Additional funding
was provided by Mrs. May Lau and the Esquel Group of
Companies.

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Sponsor's Statement

Of all cultures that have existed for thousands of years, China's is one of the oldest. Since the travels of Marco Polo, it has intrigued the Western imagination and has had an immense influence on European art and culture. This fascination with China has thrived right up until the present day, and a journey to "the Middle Kingdom" remains an extraordinarily rich and captivating experience. Since the earliest contacts between China and the West, transportation technology has made considerable contributions to cultural interchange, first through maritime trade and later, on a more extensive scale, through air traffic as well. Lufthansa, which has participated in the realization of this exhibition, undertook its first test flights to China during the 1920s, and in 1927 and 1928, the famous Asian expert Sven Hedin explored the Gobi desert and its climate with Lufthansa's assistance.

These initial adventures developed into commercial flights, when, in 1930, Lufthansa and the Chinese Ministry of Transport signed an agreement for the operation of a European-Asian air-mail company, Eurasia. The company flew its Shanghai-Nanjing-Beijing-Manzhouli route once a week, and, although this scheme soon had to be given up, its pioneering flights represented a further step in China's relationship with Europe and the rest of the world.

Today, air connections to China are both comfortable and plentiful. As in the early days of aviation, however, Lufthansa's commitment in China is greater than the transportation of passengers and cargo. Together with Air China, Lufthansa operates a maintenance center for Chinese aviation, cooperates in the training of aviation personnel, and runs air-catering kitchens.

China: 5,000 Years is an expression of the ties between the West and China as it reemerges as an economic and political superpower. We are pleased to offer our support for this exhibition as a Global Partner of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, with the conviction that works of art build the longest-lasting bridges to mutual understanding.

Frederick W. Reid
President and Chief Operating Officer
Lufthansa German Airlines



Sponsor's Statement

As we begin our association with the Guggenheim Museum, Nokia is especially pleased to play a role in bringing this rich story of five thousand years of Chinese art and culture to people of the Western world. In our contemporary global society, where the written and spoken word may disjoin, art unifies. It projects the essence of a people, their values, and their inspiration.

For Nokia, art embodies the principles of openness, creativity, and lasting value to which we as an institution are committed. For that reason, we are proud not only to sponsor *China: 5,000 Years* but also to support the Finnish Museum for Modern Arts in Helsinki and the Chinese Year of Fine Arts 1998 in Beijing. The thinking that underlies these sponsorships is reflected in our products, which are designed for aesthetic appeal as well as technological achievement.

Because of this, our association with the Guggenheim is a natural step in the continuing evolution of Nokia's corporate culture. We share a common vision of connecting people and enriching lives through technology, art, and design. From its original location in New York to the new museum in Bilbao, the Guggenheim is synonymous with the development and preservation of art, and thus with furthering knowledge and social achievement.

China: 5,000 Years is the culmination of the efforts of a distinguished international team of experts. As the largest exhibition of such art ever to be seen outside China, it presents an extremely broad and unprecedented view of Chinese cultural development in which we all can find inspiration. We hope that you enjoy the exhibition and the great wealth it offers.

Jorma Ollila
President and Chief Executive Officer

NOKIA

Sponsor's Statement

On behalf of the thousands of Ford Motor Company employees around the world, I am pleased to salute all of those involved in presenting *China: 5,000 Years*. Their unique collaboration offers the people of the United States and Spain this extraordinary exhibition, which demonstrates the full scope of Chinese artistic development over the last five thousand years.

Our thanks go to the Guggenheim Museum; Qian Qichen, Vice Premier and Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China; Li Daoyu, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the United States; the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China; the National Administration for Cultural Heritage of the People's Republic of China; China International Exhibition Agency; and Art Exhibitions China for organizing this major cultural exchange between the United States and the People's Republic of China.

We at Ford Motor Company believe deeply in shared understanding between nations, and especially in strengthening the relationship between the governments, businesses, and people of the United States and China. We are particularly pleased to serve as a partner in bringing the rich cultural heritage of China to the people of the United States and Spain, and look forward to introducing the people of China to American art when the exchange exhibition *America: 300 Years* is presented in Beijing and Shanghai in late 1998 and 1999.

Alex Trotman

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer



Sponsor's Statement

China: 5,000 Years offers Americans the opportunity to appreciate the beauty created over five millennia by one of the world's oldest civilizations. From early Neolithic jade carvings to twentieth-century pieces, the exhibition allows the world its first view of many magnificent works.

The Coca-Cola Company commends the Guggenheim Museum for bringing an extraordinary collection of Chinese artistic treasures to the United States, and for its leadership in fostering mutual understanding between cultures. We welcome the opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to education through the arts, from the global exchange of ideas and information to the promotion of human understanding and diversity.

As a partner of the Guggenheim Museum, we are pleased to help spotlight China's rich cultural heritage, and to encourage a deeper understanding of the profound achievements of generations of Chinese artists.

M. Douglas Ivester

Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer

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Preface

The Guggenheim Museum has committed itself over the past decade to breaking new ground in the exhibition of international art. The art works in this catalogue are a part of *China: 5,000 Years*, the first exhibition by a major Western museum to juxtapose the art of modern China with its traditional counterpart. This modern volume documents the significant contribution to our understanding of world art and its history achieved by the exhibition. *A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth-Century China*, the modern section of *China: 5,000 Years*, is the first exhibition held outside China's own borders to tell a comprehensive story of China's modern art. Loans for the modern section of the exhibition, which have made it possible for the first time to develop such a narrative, are drawn from collections on four continents. Organized in four parts, the exhibition recounts the challenges, struggles, and successes of Chinese artists of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries as they have faced the radically changing cultural, social, economic, and political landscapes of the past century and a half.

The exhibition was selected and organized by curators Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen. Both curators are scholars of modern Chinese art who are trained in, and remain involved with, the art of China's past. Andrews, a leading scholar of twentieth-century Chinese art, was trained in Ming painting at Berkeley. After working as a curator at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, she assumed a teaching position at The Ohio State University in 1987. Since that time she has co-curated a number of exhibitions there, most notably *Fragmented Memory: The Chinese Avant-Garde in Exile*, for the Wexner Center for the Arts (1993). She was awarded the 1996 Levenson Book Prize for Twentieth-Century China for her monumental study, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China, 1949–1979*. Kuiyi Shen, a scholar of both modern and ancient Chinese art, served as Deputy Editor-in-Chief at the Shanghai People's Art Publishing House before moving to the United States in the summer of 1989. He was Editor-in-Chief and project director for the most ambitious encyclopedia of ancient Chinese art yet published, *The Great Treasury of Chinese Fine Arts*, and

supervising editor and project director for a number of joint publications with major Chinese museums. He has continued to write and teach Chinese art history, and most recently co-curated an innovative exhibition, *Literature in Line: Lianhuanhua of China* (1997) at The Ohio State University, where he has served as a Presidential Fellow.

The artistic products of cross-cultural communication in twentieth-century China have been remarkably varied, and should serve as a larger lesson in the complexity of Asian interactions with the Western world. In the late nineteenth century, some innovations in Chinese art, particularly in the treaty-port city of Shanghai, were stimulated by Western arts and technologies, but Chinese pictorial art retained a powerful integrity. By the 1920s, many cosmopolitan Chinese artists worked in Western mediums, and created compelling images in a fully international manner. The woodcut movement, which developed rapidly in the 1930s and 1940s, is the product of a particularly fruitful episode of contact among artists of Europe, China, and Japan.

It is important to recognize, as this exhibition does, that despite cosmopolitan trends, rejection of Western artistic forms has been and continues to be a strong force within the Chinese cultural world. Multi-lingual Western-educated Chinese intellectuals argued as early as the 1920s that the West, with its nascent modernism, was only beginning to demonstrate the aesthetic sophistication that had been fundamental to Chinese painting for the previous millennium. They recognized, as few in the West were then prepared to do, that China had already worked through many of the visual and theoretical issues that then concerned Western modernists, and that ancient Chinese landscape painting possessed boldly modern elements.

The Guggenheim's intention in initiating this exhibition was to tell the whole story, which includes a third element, bringing China's unjustifiably neglected Socialist Realist art, which comprised the mainstream for more than three decades, together with art more closely related to both Western modernism and traditionalism. We are fortunate that Chinese institutional lenders have provided for this

first American exhibition of such work the most important extant examples of Socialist Realist painting to this exhibition. The era of Socialist Realism passed with the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, and the final section of the exhibition, devoted to recent paintings in the native medium of ink and water-based pigment on Chinese paper or silk, documents the growing self-confidence of contemporary China in the international world.

We are particularly grateful to Hao Zhan, director of the China International Exhibition Agency in Beijing, and his staff, for coordinating the loan procedures, photography, packing, and shipping of exhibits from the many Chinese collections represented in the exhibition.

We would like to thank, as well, the leading scholars of modern China who contributed their essays to this volume. Working in New York, China Project Director Jane DeBevoise indefatigably developed and managed the network holding together a multitude of crucial matters, large and small, required to produce an international exhibition of such a complicated nature. We were fortunate to attract a team leader of such unique qualifications: a graduate degree in Chinese art history from Berkeley, and fifteen years private sector experience, much of it in Asia, as a banker.

An exhibition of this scale could never take place without the generous support of our sponsors.

First of all, I would like to thank Lufthansa German Airlines for its ongoing commitment to the museum and for its leadership support as a Global Partner. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the support of Frederick Reid, President and Chief Operating Officer, and Josef Grendel, Vice President, Corporate Communications, for their enlightened generosity. We are also very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with the Nokia Corporation, and I am particularly indebted to the support of Jorma Ollila, President and CEO; Lauri Kivinen, Senior Vice President, Corporate Communications; Jim Bowman, Vice President, Corporate Communications, Nokia Americas; and Micaela Tucker-Kinney, Manager, Corporate Communications, Nokia Americas. We are most grateful to Alex Trotman, Chairman and Chief Executive Offi-

cer, Ford Motor Company, for his leadership and commitment to this project. We also wish to thank Wayne M. Booker, Vice Chairman, Ford Motor Company; Peter J. Pestillo, Executive Vice President, Corporate Relations, Ford Motor Company; Gary L. Nielsen, Vice President, Ford Motor Company Fund; Mabel H. Cabot, Director, Corporate Programming, Ford Motor Company, for their creativity and dedication in support of this landmark exhibition.

Finally, we would like to thank M. Douglas Ivester, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, The Coca-Cola Company, for his leadership in this important collaborative project. The collaboration of Douglas N. Daft, President, Middle and Far East Group, The Coca-Cola Company, was also vital to its realization.

Significant additional support was provided by The Starr Foundation and the W.L.S. Spencer Foundation. The generous support of the Li-Ching Cultural and Educational Foundation has assisted in publication of the two-volume catalogue accompanying the exhibition. Funding for the Shanghai School galleries was provided by the Esquel Group of Companies. Support for the Lingnan School galleries came from Mrs. May Lau, Mori Building Company, Ltd. has assisted substantially in realizing this exhibition. I would like to thank Minoru Mori, President, for his inspired support. This exhibition has also been made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities, expanding America's understanding of who we were, who we are and who we will be.

An exhibition of this scope could not have been achieved without the support of many individuals at private, institutional and governmental levels. That so many people gave so selflessly of their time and expertise is a sign of their courage to venture beyond traditional boundaries in the interests of international cooperation. We are pleased that the exhibition has provided an expanded awareness of the cultures that make up our increasingly global civilization, and a new look at the nature of modern art and the modern world.

Thomas Krens
Director,

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

Acknowledgments

When first approached by director Thomas Krens to develop an exhibition of modern Chinese art for the Guggenheim Museum, our reaction was a mixture of delight and dismay. We had complained for a decade that twentieth-century Chinese art was almost never exhibited in the major museums of modern art in the United States, but instead only in exhibition spaces devoted to the arts of Asia, where the exhibits were seen by a relatively limited and somewhat specialized segment of the potential viewing public.

We immediately recognized that the Guggenheim's exhibition proposal was ground-breaking in both its venue and its subject matter. By virtue of pairing the modern Chinese exhibition with a major exhibition of premodern masterpieces, it was intended to provide the historical link between China's past and its present. We realized with excitement that the museum had not asked us to imitate the European, Asian, or Australian museums that had recently exhibited contemporary Chinese art, but to do something that had never been done before, to make the history of modern Chinese art visible. Our mandate was both creative and ambitious, but we knew, based on the exhibition's scope and schedule, that success in locating and negotiating the necessary loans was barely within the realm of possibility.

That this possibility became reality is due in no small measure to the generous assistance offered to this unprecedented project by our colleagues in the field. Over the course of eleven strenuous journeys to research, select, and negotiate the work to be exhibited, we have incurred debts to many people. First, we are very grateful for the confidence in our vision demonstrated by Thomas Krens and by project director Jane DeBevoise. No less significant has been the support of the private and institutional collections in Asia, North America, Australia, and Europe who have so generously lent works to the exhibition. We are also extremely grateful to our guest essayists, Jonathan Spence of Yale University, Shan Guolin of The Shanghai Museum, Christina Chu of the Hong Kong Museum of Art, Xue Yongnian of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, and Mayching Kao of The Chinese University of Hong Kong for contributing their expertise to this catalogue.

We would particularly like to thank the China International Exhibition Agency and its director, Hao Zhan, for managing the loan procedures, photography, and shipping of the works we selected from public and private lenders in China. Mr. Hao was ably assisted by Wan Jiyan, Assistant to the Director; Tian Fuhui, Head of the Exhibitions Department; Li Li, You Shu, and Qi Chunxiao of the Exhibitions Department; and Yang Yan, of the Conservation Department.

We also are indebted to Zhang Wenbin, Director, and Wang Limei, Deputy Director of the Foreign Affairs Office, National Administration for Cultural Heritage, who approved our proposal to include important Qing period and modern paintings from major Chinese museum collections in the exhibition.

A crucial element in making this exhibition possible has been the unfailing support of our colleagues in Chinese museums and local institutions. They include the staff of the Shanghai Museum, including Ma Chengyuan, Director; Wang Qingzheng, Vice-Director; Shan Guolin, Chief Curator and Director of the Painting and Calligraphy Department; Zhong Yinglan, Vice-Director, Painting and Calligraphy Department; Wang Fukang, Director of the Conservation Department; and Shen Xiufang and Chen Jing, Department of Conservation. Specialists at the Palace Museum, Beijing, particularly Yang Xin, Vice-Director; Shan Guoqiang, Director of the Exhibitions Department; Hu Chui, Photographer; and Li Shi, Exhibitions Department, deserve particular thanks. The cooperation of these two major museums, China's most important collections of painting, have made possible an unparalleled showing of Shanghai School painting.

At the China National Art Gallery in Beijing, Yang Lizhou, Acting Director; Zheng Zuoliang, Director of Collections Management; and Wang Shuling, photographer, made extraordinary arrangements for our viewings and catalogue preparations. We are indebted to Huang Gaoqian, Director of the Museum of the Chinese Revolution; Li Rencai, Art Department Director; Yang Yan, Deputy Director of the Foreign Affairs Department; and Qiu Feng, of the Conservation Department, for lending works from their extraordi-

nary collection. Liao Jingwen, Director of the Xu Beihong Memorial in Beijing, was similarly generous.

At the Shanghai Lu Xun Memorial, Wang Xirong, Acting Director; Ling Xueling, Vice-Director; and Qin Haiqi, Director of the Conservation Department, generously shared their expertise and their collections with us. In Nanjing, we are indebted to the expertise and assistance of Ma Hongzeng, Vice-Director of the Jiangsu Provincial Art Gallery. Shi Dawei, Acting Director, Shanghai Painting Institute, helped with important loans.

In Hangzhou, Zha Yongling, Director of the Painting and Calligraphy Department of the Zhejiang Provincial Museum, was extremely helpful in our research. We are grateful as well for the help of Pan Gongkai, Director of China National Academy of Arts, and Lu Xin, Vice-Director of Pan Tianshou Memorial.

Faculty members of the Central Academy of Fine Arts have provided help and advice. Among them must be mentioned Jin Shangyi, Director; Lu Chen, Professor, Chinese Painting Department; Zhan Jianjun, Professor, Oil Painting Department; and Xue Yongnian, Professor of Art History.

We would like to thank the staff of the Guangzhou Municipal Art Gallery, Lu Yanguang, Director; and in particular Chen Ying, Assistant to the Director and Director of the Exhibitions Department, and Li Huanzhen, Director, Department of Collections Management. The staffs of the Guangzhou Provincial Museum and the Nanjing Museum have provided important assistance.

We are extremely grateful to those individual artists and artists' family members in China who lent paintings in their collections through cooperation with the China International Exhibition Agency and who are not identified in the catalogue captions. They include Lu Chen, Lin Yong, Shu Chuanxi, Chang Jin, Xu Lele, Xu Lei, Liao Lu, Xiao Haichun, Shi Dawei, Wang Mengqi, and Zhou Changjiang.

For various reasons, certain periods of modern Chinese art history are not fully represented in Chinese institutional collections. We are thus extremely grateful to the private and institutional

lenders outside mainland China who so generously supplemented our loans from China with important work from their collections. They are listed on a separate list of lenders, but we would like to express our particular thanks to them for making the exhibition complete.

We would like to mention in particular the assistance given to us in our study of Hong Kong collections by the staff of the Hong Kong Museum of Art, especially Gerard Tsang, Chief Curator. We are very grateful to Dr. Christina Chu, Curator, Xu Baizhai Collection, who has provided invaluable support of many kinds at successive stages of the project, aided by Assistant Curators Szeto Yuen-kit and Tang Hing-sun. Also essential to the exhibition was the help of Dr. Mayching Kao, Director, the Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

In the United States, we are particularly grateful for the support of Eleanor Pearlstein, of the Art Institute of Chicago. The kind efforts of Dr. Dewey Mosby, Director, and Jennifer Olson-Rudenko, Registrar, of the Picker Art Gallery, Colgate University, have been absolutely invaluable to the exhibition's success.

For thoughtful advice or practical assistance we are grateful to many individuals, including the artist and graphic designer Qian Juntao, Shanghai; Chang Tsong-zung, of Hanart TZ Gallery, Hong Kong; Fan Jingzhong, Director of China National Academy of Arts Press, Hangzhou; Huang Zhuan, Associate Professor, Art History Department, Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts; Xu Lei, painter, Jiangsu Provincial Art Institute, Nanjing; Ren Yi, Vice-President of Shanghai Art Academy; Qiu Ling, Professor, Central Academy of Arts and Crafts, Beijing; Gu Sen, Director, Center for Comparative Studies, China Academy of Arts, Beijing; art historian Ding Xiyan, Shanghai; New York author Joan Lebold Cohen; Robert Hefner, Hefner Galleries; Lo Ch'ing, Professor, Taiwan Normal University; Michael Y.W. Shih, collector, Taiwan; Li Xianwen, President, Lion Art Publishers, Taipei; Rita Wong, formerly of Sotheby's Taipei; and Mrs. Alice King, of Alisan Fine Arts, Hong Kong. Our research was kindly assisted by Chen Xianxing, Vice-Director, Rare Book Division, Shanghai Library. We are, as well,

grateful to Ellen Johnston Laing for her comments on the catalogue manuscript.

We cannot adequately express our gratitude to Jane DeBevoise, China Project Director in New York, whose love of Chinese art is combined with intelligence, tenacity, superb organization, remarkable mediation skills, and an ability to get things done. The two exhibitions comprising *China: 5,000 Years* would not have taken place without her backstage work. Jane kept the monumental project moving forward with the invaluable support of Project Assistant Curator Manon Slome and a remarkable team of curatorial and research assistants: Xiaoming Zhang, Emily Wei, Nichole Lin, and Katherine Cheng. Deputy Director and General Counsel Judith Cox has played a key role at important junctures in the complex organization of the project.

A special thanks goes to Adegboyega Adefope and Arata Isozaki for their exhibition design and to Patrick Seymour for design of this catalogue and the exhibition signage. We thank consulting editor Naomi Noble Richard, who has earned our profound gratitude for her extraordinary work on this catalogue, and editor Stephen Robert Frankel.

The exemplary project team in New York further consisted of Head Registrar Suzanne Quigley, Project Registrar Meryl Cohen, and Associate Registrar Joan Hendricks; Project Conservator Ellen Pratt and Senior Conservator Carol Stringari; Director of Exhibition and Collection Management Karen Meyerhoff, Manager of Exhibition Fabrication and Design Peter Read, and Exhibition Design Coordinator Jocelyn Groom; preparators Liz Jaffe and Jocelyn Brayshaw; Lighting Designer Mary Ann Hoag, assisted by Daniel Gillespie; as well as the museum's talented installation and construction teams for the project, headed by Dennis Vermeulen and Tony Villamena, which included Barry Hylton, Paul Bridge, Bob Seng, Francesco Simeti, Brian St. Cyr, Elaine Tin Nyn, Larry Mantello, Donna Kessinger, and Patrick Burns, who worked long into the night to hang the show beautifully and on schedule. In the publications department, Anthony Calnek, Director of Publications, Elizabeth Levy, Managing Editor/Manager of Foreign Editions, and Melissa Secondino, Production Assistant, deserve thanks

for truly extraordinary efforts. In the design department, Marcia Fardella, Susan Lee, and Jessica Ludwig produced beautiful exhibition signage.

In Columbus, we would especially like to thank Jan Glowski, of the Huntington Photographic Archive in the Department of the History of Art at Ohio State, whose initiative, creativity and good sense have produced an exemplary Web-site for *A Century in Crisis*. Tom Suchan, also of the Department of the History of Art, designed the maps for this catalogue. Su-hsing Lin, Zhou Yan, Marian Mazzone, and Anne Salisbury, all of The Ohio State University, assisted in research and administration for this complicated project. Seminar students Ying Chua, Wen-mei Kang, Wendy Kaiser, and Su-hsing Lin made helpful factual and interpretive suggestions. Jan Haran has patiently provided the necessary financial administration. At The Ohio State University, Christine Verzar and Mark Fullerton, past and present chairs of the Department of History of Art, along with Donald Harris and Judith Koroscik, past and present Deans of the College of the Arts, and Susan L. Huntington, Dean of the Graduate School, have provided the logistical advice and collegial support that allowed Julia Andrews to devote the 1996–1997 academic year exclusively to this project, as well as to arrange complicated schedules that permitted her to see the exhibition through to its opening in 1998.

We are grateful, as well, for support in the initial stages of the project from Jay A. Levenson, former Deputy Director for Program Administration at the Guggenheim, now at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and Wu Chao-ying, of the Taipei Municipal Museum, who was a Fulbright fellow at the Guggenheim in 1995.

This complex research and administrative endeavor has only come to fruition with the cooperation of many colleagues in China, in New York, and around the world. We are extremely grateful for the support they have so generously given during all stages of the exhibition preparation.

Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen
Curators

Notes to Readers

Romanization. Chinese is here transcribed according to the *pinyin* system of romanization adopted by the People's Republic of China and now in general use.

Personal names. All Chinese persons are cited in the text in traditional Asian fashion, surname followed by personal name. The bibliography employs the same order, even if the work cited was published in a Western language.

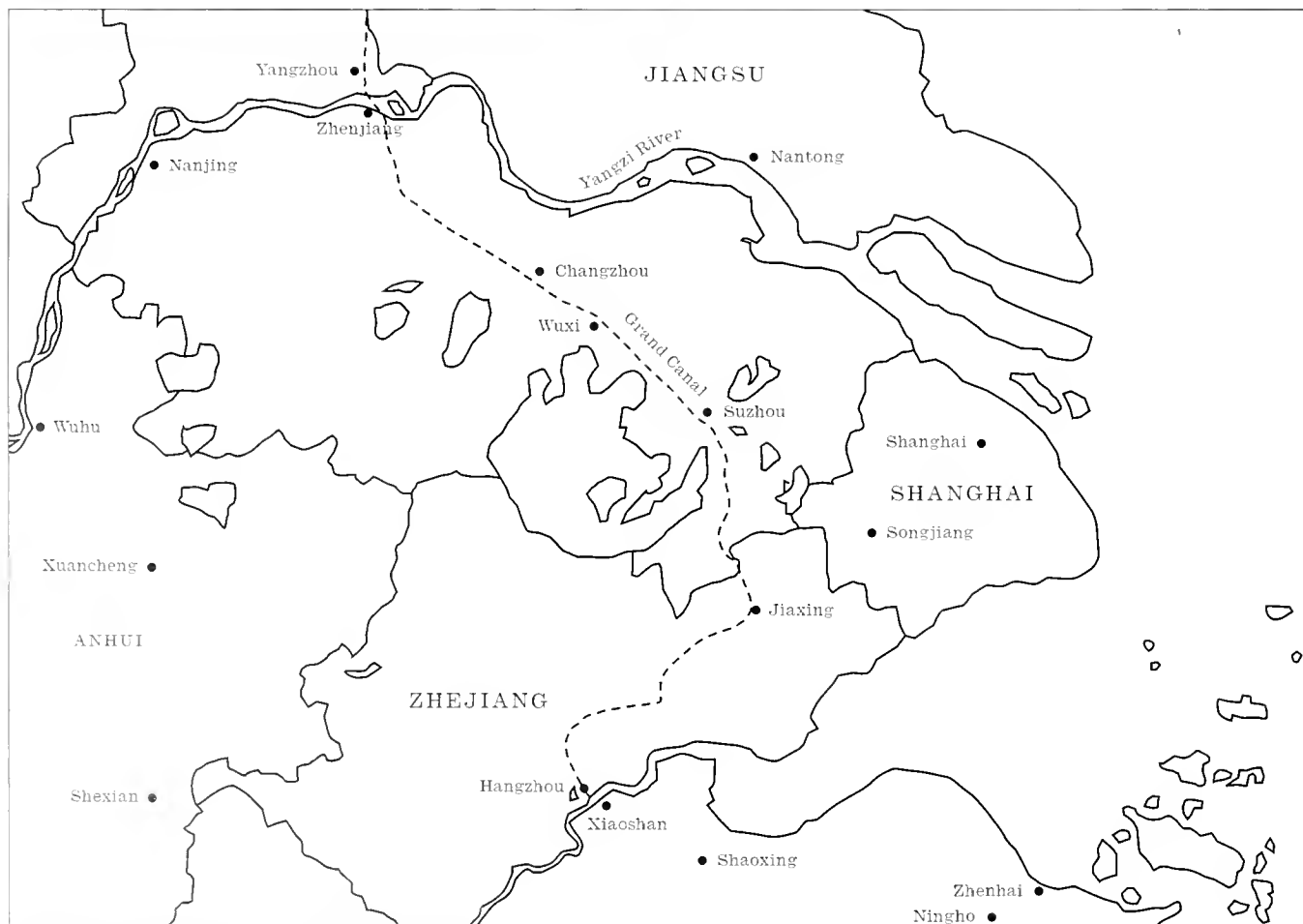
Now, as throughout history, Chinese (particularly the educated) are usually known by a variety of pseudonyms in addition to their birth name. In this volume artists are referred to by the name or names by which they are most characteristically known.

Place names. Place names have changed frequently in Chinese history, usually reflecting political changes. Present-day Beijing ("Northern Capital"), for example, has borne many names; during those years of the twentieth century in which it was not China's capital, it was called Beiping ("Northern Peace"). Many places retain their historical names in customary or literary use; for these, the text provides the present-day name in parentheses.

Translations. Within parentheses, direct translations are enclosed in quotation marks, to distinguish them from parenthetical explanations or paraphrases.



Map 1. Map of China



Map 2. The Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Shanghai areas



Map 3. China's coastal cities



Introduction

A Century in Crisis: Tradition and Modernity in the Art of Twentieth-Century China

Julia F. Andrews, The Ohio State University

Between 1850 and the present, China's venerable civilization has undergone, in the name of modernity, a series of shocks and transformations that may be unprecedented in its history. This exhibition explores the ways that Chinese artists of the period have defined modernity and a Chinese tradition against the complex background of China's recent history, a history that, in the nineteenth century, included domestic rebellions, foreign invasions and the establishment of treaty ports and, in the twentieth century, overthrow of the imperial system, urban industrialization, conquest by Japan, civil war, the Communist revolution, the Cultural Revolution, and finally the recent openings of China's economy and culture to the international community.

A key issue for modern Chinese art is the degree to which Chinese artists have chosen to adopt or reject Western conventions. Many Western observers view this issue through divers distorting preconceptions. Aficionados of China's fascinating history and its great cultural tradition may demand that contemporary Chinese artists—to be authentic—should paint only the hallowed subjects in the hallowed manners: scroll paintings in ink of a poet alone in a thatched cottage. This romantic view of China, though undeniably appealing, has no contemporary reality. A creative twentieth-century Chinese painter in Beijing or Shanghai can no more express the ethos of the fourteenth century than could his American counterpart in New York or Los Angeles. Equally misrepresentative is to admit quality *only* in Chinese art that resembles contemporary American art, with perhaps the admixture of a few quaint native touches. Work that compares favorably with American art may easily be found, and merits serious attention, but art selected by this criterion alone leaves out much of the reality of twentieth-century Asia.

We have selected as our organizational structure what we believe to be the most compelling of the multiple realities that modern Chinese artists have constructed for themselves in this period. It will be evident that we do not take Chinese painting and Western painting as polar opposites but as part of a continuum that comprises Chinese art of the past

150 years. The exhibition thus falls into four interconnected sections: "Innovations in Chinese Painting, 1850–1950"; "The Modernist Generations, 1920–1950"; "Art for New China, 1950–1980"; and "Transformations of Tradition, 1980 to the Present."

The first section, "Innovations in Chinese Painting, 1850–1950," consists of work in the traditional scroll or album format, painted by artists active primarily in treaty-port cities. Unquestionably, these artists made remarkable transformations in the techniques, use of color, and subject matter of Chinese painting, creating images that are sometimes dazzling in their surface beauty and compositional power. We begin with works by traditionally trained painters of the second half of the nineteenth century, who are usually referred to collectively as the Shanghai school. Hailing from all parts of the Yangzi River delta, they took the burgeoning commercial city of Shanghai as their artistic hub, painting for both traditional patrons of the scholarly elite and the nouveau riche merchant elite of the modern metropolis.

Several kinds of impetus impelled the artistic breakthroughs that one finds in Shanghai school painting. The most essential was individual brilliance, embodied especially in Ren Xiong (whose remarkable self-portrait [cat. 1] begins the exhibition), Ren Yi (cats. 8–13), and Wu Changshi (cats. 23–25, 56), all of whom found in the disorders of their age the conditions for creative freedom. Social factors—including the taste of the new commercial elite for novel imagery—are generally believed to have spurred some of the more successful experiments that became a hallmark of the Shanghai school (fig 1). Whereas most merchant princes of earlier eras had aspired to join the land-owning, governing, intellectual gentry-elite, and had therefore patronized the kinds of art favored by that elite, it has been convincingly suggested (though further documentation is necessary) that the new entrepreneurial elite of Shanghai, whose wealth derived from commerce with Western firms established in that treaty port, were quite different in character and ambition and hence also different in their patronage of art.

As China's imperial regime declined

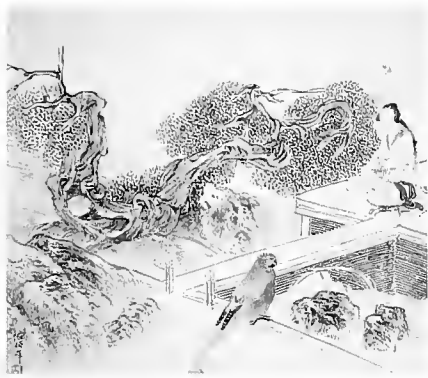


Figure 1-a. Ren Yi (1840-1895). *Album of Female Figures*. 1888. *Album, ink and color on paper*. Palace Museum, Beijing.



Figure 1-b.

and this new locus of wealth and power assumed sufficient importance to challenge—or, more accurately, ignore—the social position of the Confucian scholar-official, the social need for newly rich merchants to take on the cultural trappings of the literati was weakened. As a result, elements from popular or Western art, considered vulgar by the classically educated scholar-gentry class, were enthusiastically adopted by many late nineteenth-century artists, who had matured in this changed environment and worked for the new patrons.

As Shan Guolin observes in his essay in the present volume, elements from popular and foreign culture led to major artistic breakthroughs in compositional structure, use of color, figural rendering, and spatial conception. Shanghai school artists also broke other taboos in their quest for technical innovations. They mingled two previously distinct techniques commonly used for flower-and-bird (*huaniao*) subjects, the loose-brush *xieyi*, or expressionist manner with precisely detailed, fine-line (*gongbi*) rendering. Artists such as Ren Yi (1840-1895), even more notably, began using techniques developed for rendering leaves and flowers to paint human figures or large animals. Although perhaps not intended as a unified work of art, his *Album of Figures, Birds, and Flowers*, of 1881-1882, a somewhat unusual assemblage of six leaves of figures and six of the genre traditionally called “flowers-and-birds,” makes the success of this technical experiment explicit (cat. 9). In 1888, in his ironic portrait of his friend Wu Changshi, he went so far as to render Wu’s uniform in the *xieyi* flower manner (cat. 12).

Patrons of this new art were Chinese, and the artists did not generally associate with foreigners; though inhabiting the same urban centers, the two groups seem to have remained separate, as though existing in parallel universes. Thus, the incremental and largely unself-conscious adoption of foreign elements into Shanghai school painting took place in ways that generally had more to do with practices of the past than with Westernizing trends of the twentieth century. Many of these adoptions were technical novelties rather than fundamental shifts in practice. One example was a

transparent water-color pigment called “Western red” in Shanghai: employed within traditional artistic practice, it provided novel and brilliant color, but it was, in effect, only a minor enlargement of the technical equipment of Chinese painting. The influence of foreign technology (specifically photography) on Chinese portraiture of the 1870s and 1880s is unmistakable (see cat. 8), and it is probable that Ren Yi sought to incorporate the virtues of photography while retaining the excellence of Chinese painting. The spread of lithographic printing in late nineteenth-century Shanghai led to transformations in illustration, as painters, still wielding a Chinese brush, incorporated certain Western spatial devices into their Chinese ink drawings (see cat. 22).

The two early examples of printing in this exhibition, Ren Xiong’s *Drinking Cards with Illustrations of the 48 Immortals* (*Lixian jiupai*) of 1854 (cat. 4) and Wu Jiayou’s illustrations for his 1891 issue of *Fleeting Shadow Pavilion Pictorial* (*Feiyingge huabao*) (cat. 22), may represent the shift in style and technology from innovation within Chinese tradition to a new, hybrid form of illustration that became typical of treaty-port Shanghai. The former, a brilliantly conceived woodcut series in a traditional format, was novel in imagery and iconography, undoubtedly serving as a source for many later Shanghai school painters. In its original design the piece appears to have been intended for use in drinking games, with each card indicating which player should drink how much wine. The figures are exaggerated or otherwise manipulated for expressive purposes, but most of the settings—the least important part of each composition—are quite simple. In the later *Fleeting Shadow Pavilion Pictorial*, however, printed lithographically from line drawings made with brush and ink, some of the illustrations emphasize the settings as strongly as the figures. The illustration for “Thief in the Flower Garden,” a tabloid-style current-affairs feature story, depicts a jealous client mutilating the famous Jiangsu courtesan Wang Sibao by cutting off her hair. The interior of the courtesan’s chamber is rendered in remarkable detail, with elegant period furniture and the



Figure 2. He Tianjian (1891–1977). Viewing the Waterfall at Mt. Yandang. 1935. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper. Collection of Michael Y.W. Shih.

standard implements of her trade on the wall, such as small portraits (probably photographs) of herself and her “sisters,” her lute, decorative hanging scrolls and calligraphy, a mirror, a pipe, and so on. Such details, rendered within the representation of a three-dimensional interior, lent a feeling of truth to the quasi-journalistic tale presented. Innovative in its technology and modern subject matter, this magazine appealed to its urban readership with current events (sometimes shocking), images of female beauty, exotic technology, and violence.

Motifs or practices closely related to those found in Japanese art of the period also made their way into Shanghai school painting. Some compositions in Ren Xiong’s (1823–1857) extremely varied 120-leaf *Album After the Poems of Yao Xie* (cat. 3), painted in 1850–1851, closely resemble pages from Hiroshige’s slightly later *Views of Edo*, and the sharp color contrasts in the album similarly suggest exposure to Japanese prints. Whether and how Ren Xiong might have seen such images is still unknown, but this early album provides testimony to the richness of the visual environment in which Shanghai school artists worked and to the innovations it made possible. The breakthroughs of Ren Xiong and Ren Yi have had resonances in every subsequent period.

The tastes of a new class of patrons, a new urban environment, and the adoption of foreign elements underlie the innovations in nineteenth-century painting. These innovations, however, do not signify a fundamental break in the nature of Chinese art. They may be more accurately seen as intuitive or unself-conscious responses to an overall modernizing trend, most clearly visible in China’s economy and diplomacy. It could be argued that a decisive shift in the *mentality* of the Chinese artist took place at the end of the nineteenth century, one that paralleled intellectual changes in Chinese culture as a whole.

Until roughly 1895 Chinese—artists included—still believed in the age-old notion of China’s centrality in the world. Foreign elements made clever and appealing additions to the repertoire but were in no way fundamental to the nature of art. Just as the North American chili pep-

per was completely absorbed into Chinese cuisine as an addition to, but not a replacement for, the subtle Chinese *hua-jiao* pepper, so might the pigment known as “Western red” join Chinese pigments in the mixing pots on the desk of the Chinese painter. Chinese people had, of course, learned a good deal about the world from early times, both by land travel across the Silk Route and by ocean voyages. For example, at the beginning of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644)—slightly earlier than the European age of exploration—the Chinese court had sponsored maritime expeditions which brought back exotic flora, fauna, and goods from Africa and elsewhere. From about 1895, however, educated Chinese underwent a fundamental conceptual reorientation, becoming increasingly aware that their cultural position was no longer central and that China, the self-named “Central Kingdom,” “had been pushed to an asymmetrical position as merely one nation among many more than they had previously known.

This shift, a response to domestic and international weakness and crises, was enormously significant: China’s self-image was transformed. By the turn of the century changes in the educational system and civil-service examinations, as well as the departure of many talented students for study abroad, had made clear to everyone that the Chinese no longer considered themselves to constitute the dominant culture of the world. From this point on, painting in ink rather than oil became a conscious choice, one that might have been motivated by personal, ideological, or commercial considerations, but one that would never again be assumed in China as the “natural” way for a Chinese artist to paint. A new Chinese term became necessary to label this art, as the old word for painting was no longer sufficiently clear. Modern painting with ink and/or water-soluble pigments on Chinese paper or silk is usually called *guohua* (“national painting”).

The first section of the exhibition goes on to explore the various directions that Chinese painting took between the fall of the last dynasty in 1911 and the establishment of the Communist government in 1949. As Kuiyi Shen and Christina Chu observe in their essays in the present



Figure 3. Qian Juntao (b. 1906). Cover of Famous European Love Letters of the Past Two Hundred Years. 1930s. Lithographs. Collection of the artist.

volume, this period was characterized by remarkable stylistic pluralism and by a unifying ideology. To put it simply, all artists of this group believed in the necessity of preserving and developing Chinese painting, even as they differed about its definition and its future direction. A strong majority of these artists repudiated the stylistic “coercion” associated with the most orthodox interpretations of the literati (scholar-elite) painting theory that had dominated Chinese art during the preceding three centuries. The Gao brothers of Canton, who were strongly influenced by the naturalism of the Kyoto school, believed that Chinese painting needed to be reformed. Their admirer Xu Beihong (1895–1953) returned from study in Europe to teach that Chinese painting required a foundation in Western drawing (see cats. 47, 61) rather than in traditional techniques. Others, more sympathetic to tradition, protested that any decline in the quality of modern Chinese painting was a correctable lapse; that innovation within the tradition was still possible; and that lack of moral fiber, strength of will, and education were the essence of the problem (see fig. 2).

Perhaps the most conspicuous painter of this last group was Zhang Daqian (Chang Dai-chien; 1899–1983), who proved by his practice that traditional painting was still vital, but that it might require technical mastery, a wide-ranging artistic education, and a certain willingness to take risks (see cats. 44, 45, 178). The most active theorists of this group, including Huang Binhong (1864–1955), He Tianjian (1891–1977), and Zheng Yong (1894–1952) (see cats. 40, 43, 53), developed somewhat more slowly as artists, but during their lifetimes achieved the creative freedom, technical skill, and artistic distinction that they believed necessary to the modern Chinese artist. Even Wu Hufan (1894–1968)—the grandson of a famous Qing dynasty literatus and a self-conscious inheritor of the tradition of the Suzhou literati—organized his paintings in a slightly new way. His landscape paintings, while related to traditional modes of composition, occasionally display contrasts in focus that suggest not only painting of the Song period, but also the newly popular genre of landscape photography (see cat. 42). By the 1930s many

guohua artists taught in academic departments where oil painting and life drawing dominated the curriculum. They were self-conscious in their pursuit of innovation within the Chinese tradition, and often took the preservation of Chinese painting as a mission. Chinese modernity, for them, required Chinese cultural forms.

Artists represented in the exhibition's second section, “The Modernist Generations, 1920–1950,” believed, on the contrary, that modern (usually Western) forms were necessary for Chinese art to function in modern society. As Mayching Kao notes in her essay in the present volume, Western art was imported into China at the turn of the twentieth century with little debate, as an integral part of the new academic curriculum. Western art forms were believed to be essential for the development of Chinese science and industry, and many of the earliest Chinese artists who studied abroad had this practical function as one of their motives. For example, Chen Zhifo (1895–1962), who was the first Chinese student to take a foreign degree in commercial art, spent the remainder of his life promoting excellence of industrial design (see cat. 81). The growth of printing and textile manufacture into major industries indeed created a need for artistic talent of this type and was an important impetus to modern artistic developments. Graphic designers mastered the latest international styles from Europe, the Americas, and Japan, and began to give the radically Westernized new literature of the time dramatically new packaging (see fig. 3).

With the iconoclastically pro-Western May Fourth movement of the 1920s, however, Western art began to move from a position of pure functionality to one of fundamental cultural value, thus acquiring important ideological implications. As Xue Yongnian points out in his essay in the present volume, even the traditional practice of calligraphy was politically charged during this period. Oil painting continued to be supported by the educational establishment, as it is today, and claims for its superiority and its modernity were widely accepted. In a preface to the national exhibition catalogue of 1929, Cai Yuanpei (1867–1940).



Figure 4. Cai Weilian (1904–1940), *Figure*. Oil on canvas.

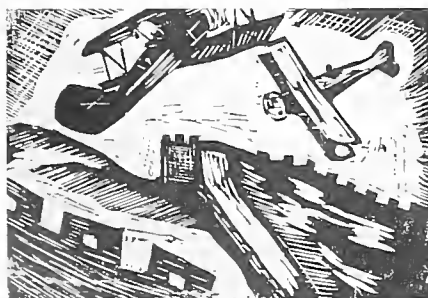


Figure 5. Liu Xian (b. 1915), *Peace Messengers Above the Great Wall*, 1932. Woodcut. Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai.

whose daughter Weilian (1904–1940) was a talented modernist oil painter (see fig. 4), lamented the failure of oil painting to reach the quantity and quality of the *guohua* selections, a goal that he hoped might be realized in the near future. With regard to Western art created by Chinese artists, as with traditional Chinese painting, the styles considered most modern or most suitable to China's modern condition were a subject of sometimes bitter debate, but oil painters were generally united in their belief that Western mediums were superior to or more progressive than indigenous ones. Pang Xunqin (1906–1985) made determined and idealistic attempts to transplant his newly acquired modernist vocabulary from Paris to Shanghai in the 1930s (see cat. 64). When war broke out in 1937, these efforts were aborted, and the important work of his subsequent career involved promotion of the decorative arts rather than further development of the painting style in which he may have produced his most interesting work. Xu Beihong, in contrast, fought to develop European academic realism, a regressive mission that bore fruit in the context of the Communist art world (see cat. 61).

Throughout most of the twentieth century, oil painters have occupied a slightly different position from other kinds of artists in China, in that few of them have relied on the art market for their livelihood. Unlike more traditional Chinese paintings, or works of the most successful oil painters in Europe, oil painting in China appears to have had almost no market. It flourished as an academic rather than a commercial endeavor, similar to the publishing of scholarly books and articles by college professors today.

This is not to say that oil painting in China was unimportant. On the contrary, by the 1930s some oil painters were national celebrities, and the debates over modern painting styles attracted widespread attention. Moreover, oil paintings were frequently reproduced by the commercial publishing industry, appearing in everything from movie magazines to women's periodicals, and there is no question that oil painting was considered a crucial part of China's culture. That China's citizenry knew it primarily from

the printed page may be regarded as another significant feature of China's modern age.

A third type of Western art, the woodblock print, became a link between the radical iconoclasts of the May Fourth movement and the subsequent Communist regime. At the instigation of leftist writer Lu Xun (1881–1936), young Chinese artists adopted the styles of European avant-garde prints to express their alarm and anger over China's deteriorating political, social, and diplomatic situation in the 1930s and 1940s. Of particular interest in this body of material is Lu Xun's attempt to synthesize what he considered worthwhile in European and Japanese culture with positive aspects of China's past. The woodblock print was invented in China some thousand years ago, and it was a recognition of the modernity of China's ancient traditions, combined with shame at its recent failures, that motivated Lu Xun and young artists who understood the complexity of his thinking (see fig. 5).

The brutal occupation of China by Japan between 1937 and 1945 focused the attention of most Western-style artists on the anti-Japanese war. Their work, in both oil painting and woodcut, overtly exhorts their fellow citizens to resist the invaders, or poignantly expresses their own distress at the suffering of China's people (see cats. 69–73, 109–115, 117–127). Their increasingly critical attitude toward the government also helped lay the groundwork for the Communist victory in 1949.

The third section of the exhibition, *Art for New China, 1950–1980*, is devoted to Socialist Realism, the Western art form practiced throughout China between 1950 and 1980. Russia replaced Paris as the source of up-to-date styles in the 1950s, as enthusiastic young artists were sent to Leningrad for advanced training. Social utility was believed to be a key component of this new art, a virtue that, along with its novelty, gave it immense appeal to idealistic young artists as they strove to rebuild their nation after the war. Styles that were condemned in the U.S.S.R. or that were considered formalistic or ideologically inappropriate—especially modernist oil painting and traditional ink painting—were all but

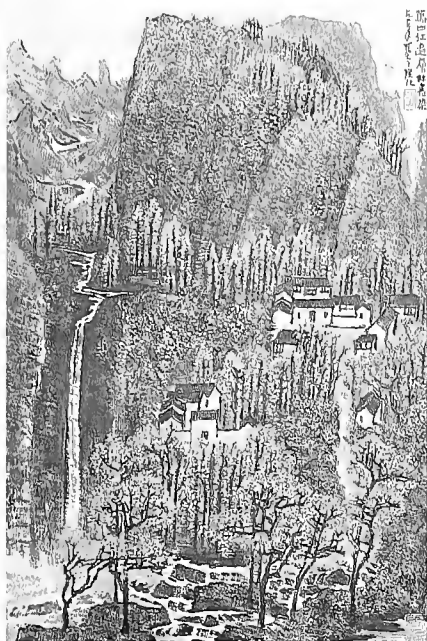


Figure 6. Li Keran (1907–1989). *Ten Thousand Crimson Hills*. 1973. *Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper*. Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing.

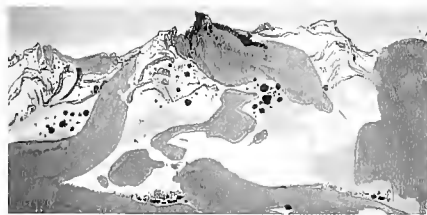


Figure 7. Wu Guanzhong (b. 1919). *Spring Snow*. 1983. *Ink and color on paper*. Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing.

eradicated, and new modes replaced them. One may observe how closely Chinese figure painting—the now-dominant trend—came to resemble oil painting during this period (see cats. 137, 143). At the same time, however, counter-currents emerged, most notably attempts to monumentalize traditionalist Chinese ink painting in order to bring works in that medium out of the scholar's studio and into public spaces. *Clearing After Rain*, Pan Tianshou's (1898–1971) *guohua* masterpiece of 1962 (cat. 151), which is almost unprecedented in scale and format, was designed to be framed and hung in a large public space, and thus takes on many of the functions of monumental oil painting, but without adopting Western subject matter or styles.

By the end of the first decade of the Socialist Realist era, or about 1960, mere emulation of Soviet styles was replaced by a state-sponsored art that was undeniably Chinese (see fig. 6). One aspect of this Sincizing trend, the incorporation of folk-art aesthetics into Chinese figure painting, reached its most bombastic level during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Much of the art of the Cultural Revolution was produced by passionately patriotic young artists, and it sometimes emanates a sincerity that is possible only when the icon maker is a true believer. One such example is Lin Yong's "Great Job! Mao Zedong Investigating the Peasant Movement in Hunan" (cat. 155), a monumental image of a kindly Communist organizer visiting his people, painted in 1969 and 1970. Other examples, including Liu Wenxi's *New Spring in Yan'an* (cat. 157), look almost like parodies, although very little subsequent painting can compare in sheer power to these huge, heartfelt images. This section concludes with work produced just after the death of Mao in 1976, when it was revealed to all who adored him that the intensity of their faith may have been misguided. For a brief moment Socialist Realism became a protest art, as the senseless battles among revolutionary factions were recorded in all their ironically painful detail (see cat. 167). At the same time new heroes were sought, in the canon of early Communist leaders and among the laboring masses (see cats. 163 and 169), as people questioned their

personal history and the national past (see cats. 167–172).

The concluding section of the exhibition, "Transformations, 1980 to the Present," consists of work, most of it recent, that was created outside the bounds of Maoist ideology. Socially and economically, this has been a period of rebuilding and opening to the international world. One might expect the resulting exposure to contemporary Western ideas and practices to have led to cultural homogeneity in China, but it is surprising to observe that these two decades of intense contact with the outside world have been characterized by a remarkable pluralism and by extraordinary transformations within the tradition of Chinese painting. This section focuses on three major trends in *guohua* of the post-Mao period, including a small number of works from the Chinese diaspora that have influence or resonances in present-day China.

Artists in the first group may be described as Literati-Expressionists. Generally born around the turn of the century, they are products of a uniquely well-educated generation, versed in both classical Chinese and Western culture. Of particular importance to their artistic achievement is their thorough mastery of the techniques of traditional painting, and the best of their painting is executed with the subtlety, restraint, and technical beauty to be expected in masterpieces of China's classical heritage. The most characteristic works of this traditionalist group are those by Lu Yanshao (1909–1993) and Song Wenzhi (b. 1918), who reemerged after the Cultural Revolution, in old age, to demonstrate the continued possibility of creating striking compositions with the exquisitely controlled brushwork of the literati tradition (see cats. 174, 176).

A slightly more international trend may be seen in the works of Wang Jiqian (C. C. Wang; b. 1907) and Zhang Daqian, both of whom lived abroad for many years (see cats. 177, 178). Able to reflect upon the tradition of Chinese painting from a knowledge of its alternatives, these two classically trained masters, in quite different ways, modernized the look of their Chinese paintings by gracefully transforming accidental traces of pigment or ink into imaginary landscapes. Wang's

use of crumpled paper dabbings to suggest the structures of his mountain landscapes and Zhang's luscious splashes of ink and color evoke the immediacy of Abstract Expressionism. However, both artists might, with equal legitimacy, point to sources in China's classical past, where similar practices were well recorded.

Less classically oriented artists, such as Li Keran (1907–1989), made breakthroughs in the 1970s by emphasizing a rarely seen phenomenon in Chinese painting: the rendering of light and its reflections (see cat. 175). Such dramatic tonal contrasts were of concern to only a few artists of China's past (including the early Qing individualist Gong Xian), but Li made it his artistic focus. He sought a timeless quality that might evoke the grandeur of ancient Chinese landscape painting, but without emulating the brushwork or compositions of antique masterpieces.

The inherently modern values of the tradition from which these artists emerged make it pointless to try to distinguish between aspects of their work that might be "modern and Western" and aspects that might be "literati style." Indeed, all of them would claim to be modern *and* Chinese.

A second, younger cohort of artists may be called the Neo-Traditionalists. All were born at mid-century, into a world in which the Chinese writing brush was no longer in daily use and the master-disciple relationships in painting education had been almost entirely supplanted by modern schools. Perhaps most important, classical painting was no longer to be understood solely through the private collections to which one might gain access, but could be seen reproduced in books and magazines, exhibited in museums, and taught in art-history classes. Each of the artists represented in this section pursues the virtues of a different part of China's artistic history. Zhang Hong (Arnold Chang; b. 1954) seeks the subtlety and cool restraint of Yuan literati painting, particularly the tradition of Ni Zan and Huang Gongwang, while incorporating some traces of the monumentality of even earlier painting (see cat. 179). Li Huayi (b. 1948) transforms the dramatic manner of the Song masters to create fantastic compositions

that evoke the late Ming master Wu Bin (see cat. 180). Shu Chuanxi (b. 1932) emulates the exquisite paleness of the literati plum painters of the Song and Yuan periods (see cat. 182), while Liao Lu (b. 1944) is inspired by the ironies to be found in the tradition of Zhu Da (see cat. 181). Finally, one of the most aggressive pieces of recent traditionalist painting is Xiao Haichun's huge landscape triptych (cat. 183). Modeled stylistically and compositionally on landscape masterpieces of the tenth or eleventh century, the work assaults the viewer by its scale. One may associate the classical technical and compositional references in this painting with the tradition of Dong Yuan and Juran in the tenth century, but it overwhelms the viewer with the power of painting, not with the landscape image or even with evocations of art-historical tradition.

One feature shared by all these works is superb mastery of traditional brushwork. Some of the painters, such as Zhang Hong and Liao Lu, sought out traditional masters to instruct them in its subtleties, but others have learned through study of museum exhibitions and reproductions. Xiao Haichun, for example, incessantly copies reproduction scrolls from the National Palace Museum to better understand the brushwork of the Song masters (see cat. 183).

While compositional interest is important to these artists, of equal concern is the beauty of brushwork. Able to study a wider range of paintings than most artists of China's pre-modern age, the very personal choices they have made in expressive style indicates their ability to take full advantage of their position in history.

The final section of the exhibition presents artists we call the Post-Traditionalists. A feature common to most artists of this group is that they came to the practice of *guohua* with little concern for or training in classical brushwork (see fig. 7). Many of the artists, including Wu Guanzhong (b. 1919), Wang Wuxie (Wucius Wong; b. 1936), and Liu Guosong (b. 1932), were trained in Western painting (see cats. 186, 187, 193, 195). Others, such as Zhou Sicong (1939–1995), Shi Dawei (b. 1950), Jia Youfu (b. 1942), Lu Fusheng (b. 1949), Xu Lele (b. 1955), and

Wang Mengqi (b. 1947) (see cats. 199, 200, 188, 201, 202, 203), were educated during the Socialist Realist period, when traditional brushwork was under attack. What these artists have chosen to do with ink and paper is extraordinarily varied and original, but marks a clear break with the art of pre-modern China. The aggressive expressionism of Liu Guosong, the decorative abstraction of Wu Guanzhong, and the monumental intensity of Jia Youfu, speak to an audience that is quite different from that of the past. Much of this work is expected to be confronted in a public art space, not in the scholar's studio, and to be reproduced in magazines and catalogues. It tends to be explicitly aware of its inescapably complicated relationship with cultural constructions of China's past, the realities of China's modern history, and as yet unfulfilled hopes for its future.

Artists who have come to maturity after the death of Mao generally find themselves in a very self-conscious relationship to their history, and often use the medium of *guohua*, with its many possible ambiguities, to question themselves and their tradition. One group within the Post-Traditionalists, labeled by critics in China as "the new literati painters," seem to be making exactly the opposite point—the impossibility of contemporary people ever approaching the literati ideal. The most notable examples of this may be found among artists who emerged in Nanjing in the late 1980s and early 1990s and were trained in, but reject, Socialist Realism. Wang Mengqi, for example, paints mildly distorted images of ancient sages at leisure (cat. 203). His lofty hermits all look a bit dissatisfied, or worse, ridiculous, as though intended as parodies of the glorious tradition of Chinese sagehood. His work thus seems to question the possibility of modern men attaining a state of classical virtue. Viewed in the context of China's current economic, social, and cultural change, and in relationship to the moralizing function of much of China's Confucian and Communist figure painting, the sense of anomie conveyed here becomes a powerful statement. Others, like the German-trained Shu Chuanxi in his album *Rhythm of the Orient* (cat. 196), use signs of China's artistic culture, such

as seals, rubbings, and calligraphy, for purely formal purposes.

The border between what we might describe as modern and post-modern in the use of antique motifs, between formalism and irony, between emulation and appropriation, is not at all clear in Chinese art of this period. The actuality of China's twentieth-century cultural history is that in the second half of the twentieth century, and particularly in the People's Republic in the post-Mao period, modernism, Socialist Realism, post-modernism, and various forms of traditionalism coexist, competing and interacting in ways that may bear little relationship to the history of Western art. The pluralism of Chinese art today, in which the competing trends of the first half of the twentieth century have met the fragmentation of the contemporary art world, make it injudicious to predict the appearance of any unifying trend. China's artists will continue to construct their culture at the juncture of their own particular history and the trends of the contemporary world of which they are a part.

China's Modern Worlds

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The incredible complexity and durability of Chinese culture pose a challenge to the historian who is seeking elements of the new. The record of China's past can, if read with partial eyes, yield evidence of virtually any kind of social phenomenon. Thus, Chinese scholars of different periods have found in China's own early records traces of primitive democracy, sexual egalitarianism, socialism, feudalism, extreme individualism, totalitarianism, full-fledged industrial revolutions, tenacious manorial structures, utopianism, theocracy, the principles of scientific method, and sprouts of capitalism.

Among the first things sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Westerners found in China—because they wanted to—were proofs that the earliest Chinese classical texts yielded clear evidence that Chinese had once worshiped the same one true God as the monotheistic Jews and the Christians. Late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Westerners found in the structures of Chinese language a key to all other world languages. Late in the eighteenth century Chinese garden design offered a cosmic solution to problems of spatial arrangement within time. By the late nineteenth century the *Yijing* ("Book of Changes") promised to solve the riddles of the meaning of life. And closer to our own time Daoism's early texts brought Westerners the solace of disengagement from an impossible present.

With such a wealth of potential crosscurrents, whether real or imagined, the historian seeking to pinpoint China's moments of most profound change has a multitude of choices. But of these, the period with the strongest claim would seem to be the 1850s and 1860s. By that time, several world-historical phenomena were inexorably flowing together. In the diplomatic spheres, battles over freedom of trade, international law, and ambassadorial representation had culminated in the post-Opium War agreements. Those agreements ended the tributary and Canton systems (under which Western merchants were restricted to Canton, to prescribed trading periods, and to commerce with state-designated and state-supervised merchants). They also brought foreign powers access to specially privileged treaty-port zones at

many points on China's coast, as well as an international legation quarter in Beijing itself. Militarily, the new technologies of exploding shells, smokeless powder, repeating rifles, and steam-powered ships had presented the once-proud Manchu founders of the Qing dynasty with inescapable proof of their own weakness on the field of battle.

In the religious sphere, Protestant and Catholic missionaries had strengthened their hold on China through treaty-imposed rights to build churches and to preach their faiths openly; themselves protected by the laws of their own nations, they could extend the same protection to their converts; and they had begun to spread networks of schools and hospitals that changed the shape of knowledge and the parameters of public health. The nation's economy was transformed by the sale of opium and the opening of China's inland waterways to foreign goods and potential export trade, which made China—unwittingly at first—a partner in the developing nexus of world trade and price patterns, with all the potential for enormous profits and for disastrous failure that this brought to China's farmers and merchants. In science, teams of Chinese and foreign scholars were changing the dimensions of the Chinese language by constructing the new vocabularies essential to translating terminology in chemistry, physics, geology, and mechanics into accessible and consistent Chinese forms, while special reading rooms, lectures, and newsletters widely disseminated the new forms to the public, including many non-school audiences. And Chinese culture was profoundly affected by Western architecture and urban planning, styles of dress, meals, relations between the sexes, treatment of children, forms of public association, and notions of public space and privacy, all of which challenged accepted Chinese norms.

The impact of Western forms on Chinese aesthetic activities during this period, though harder to trace, is nonetheless real. Previous inflows of foreign visual elements had on the whole been absorbed without causing massive change. Central Asian designs in textiles, Middle Eastern coloring agents in porcelain, Buddhist and Indian elements in sculpture, European etchings of Christian

and landscape subjects, copper engravings, and certain aspects of the Western techniques of perspective and chiaroscuro through watercolor and oil had all made their ways into the Chinese tradition, and often enriched it. But the mid-nineteenth-century innovations impinged upon Chinese tradition that was itself now under siege. It was seen as having lost much of its dynamism and creativity; and the various late Ming and early Qing individualist schools—along with the cult of calculated and deliberately exaggerated eccentricity during the Qianlong period (ca.1735–1799)—had not brought about a profound revival. Painting could be seen to be feeding too directly on the past, just as most of the “evidential research” schools of mid-Qing scholarship had turned inward and away from pressing social concerns.

Political and military realities heightened the dislocation. Between 1853 and 1864 the Taiping rebels, originating in the southern provinces of Guangxi and Guangdong, had founded their self-proclaimed “heavenly capital” in Nanjing. In pursuing their ideal society based on pseudo-Christian principles, they had aroused the implacable enmity of the Confucian elite and of the Qing government, and the accompanying years of murderous warfare had ravaged much of central China—a huge swath of land that extended from Wuchang across much of Anhui to Jiangxi, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang.

In this seesaw warfare many cities changed hands a dozen times, and countless art collections and libraries were lost. One of the few havens for the fleeing elite was Shanghai, which though taken over in part by secret society armies in the early 1850s, was reconsolidated as a safe bastion by the joint efforts of the Qing authorities and the foreign community. From 1856 onward, although the city was threatened at times by the Taiping’s eastward expansion, its defenses held firm. Its economy also grew rapidly, as the opportunities created by the war made the city the focus for both the Chinese coastal and riverine trade and the growing investments of the foreigners. Before the 1850s Shanghai had been a prosperous enough market town, but not a major cultural or administrative center. By the 1860s it was transformed: its high-

ly mobile refugee population included a phenomenal number of talented craftsmen, scientists, and artists from all across central China, and along with these were adventurous and often highly skilled foreigners, as well as those Chinese with the wit or the government contacts to grow rich in the uncertain but open times. Military contractors, grain dealers, gunrunners, and dock workers coexisted comfortably with artisans, craftsmen, and shopkeepers.

It is not surprising that the first major “Shanghai school” of Chinese art should emerge in such a rich milieu for patrons and creators. The foreign concession areas, where each group of foreign nationals lived under its own jurisdiction—the French just down the river from the British—were dramatically new in visual terms, laid out, paved, and lighted in ways not seen before in China. Networks of new roads fanned out into the countryside, around the walled Chinese city, spreading ribbons of Western architecture. The race course was a new form of social space for spectators and participants alike. Photographic studios became a feature of the town, and the idea of the group or individual portrait made from life was rapidly accepted by Chinese town-dwellers. Though what exactly did “from life” mean, in those clean and spuriously domestic studio environments, with a worn rug on the floor and a clock or a vase of flowers on the table, confronting the foreigner behind his bellows camera, head hidden by a black-velvet covering?

With the suppression of the Taiping in 1864, the Qing dynasty’s problems were not over, but at least a corner had been turned. China turned to a period of reconstruction, which included the economic restoring of the Yangzi River region, the resettling of ravaged lands, and the rebuilding of ruined cities. These processes also brought a steady accretion of foreign power. Part of the Chinese attempt at rebuilding included an ideological component, an attempt to redefine and rearticulate the meaning of Confucian values, and to establish education in the Classics once again on a morally sound footing. But inevitably, for many influential Chinese officials and scholars, it entailed the grafting of elements of for-

eign technology onto the substructure of nativist values, as if somehow the pain of change could thus be lessened.

The tale of this process and its ultimate unsuccess is central to the last years of the nineteenth century in China. The impact of the new came in too many areas at once to be coordinated, let alone controlled. Foreign-style arsenals might be built by the Chinese to manufacture foreign-looking weapons or machinery, but how could one supervise all that went along with such change—the schooling, the railways, the coal and iron mines, the technical handbooks, the concentrations of urban laborers, the problems of distribution and diffusion? The Qing court itself began to flounder again, losing territory in its north to Russia and Germany, yielding Taiwan to Japan in 1895 and other areas to Britain and to France. In 1900 the Boxer uprising, with its alleged goal of exterminating foreigners and shoring up the dynasty, failed ignominiously, and the reparations exacted by the Western powers left the state with huge debts.

The economic center farthest from Beijing and from the fatally weakened court was Canton, which in conjunction with the British-controlled enclave of Hong Kong had become a vibrant center for international and domestic trade. From Canton, countless emigrants had traveled to the United States, and hundreds of students had ventured to Japan in quest of advanced education and the secret of Japan's economic and political success. They returned imbued with a new sense of nationalism and purpose, in which the need to shore up the dynasty had been replaced by a new desire to supplant it altogether, in the name of national strength, with a republic or constitutional monarchy. Sun Yat-sen typified this new outlook. He was born near Canton, educated in Hawaii and Hong Kong, at home in Japan and London, and his revolutionary organization of disaffected Chinese played a crucial role in the overthrow of the dynasty. As in Shanghai, art followed politics, and a Canton (or Lingnan) school of artists drew on both Japanese and Western elements to make their mark. Nationalism had changed direction: it was the modern and the contested that was to imbue the tradition and the country with new life.

The Qing dynasty formally came to an end early in 1912—forced into dissolution by a combination of constitutional and revolutionary opposition forces—and henceforth China was (in name at least) a republic, even if controlled much of the time by independent militarists. Up until 1912 Chinese nationalists could claim that it was the Manchus (the warriors from the north who had conquered the country in 1644) who were to blame for China's weakness. After 1912 they had only themselves to answer to, although the forces of foreign imperialism were still ominously present and the power of Japan was becoming steadily more threatening.

Even before the dynasty's fall, young Chinese men and women had begun a new series of odysseys to other lands besides Japan, most especially to the United States and to France. In a general way, they were still traveling to seek a cure for China's ailments, to find elements of other cultures that could replace those they found most wanting in their own society. But in particular, they criticized Confucian doctrine for being so constricting and outdated that even its virtues were hard to espouse in public anymore. Confucianism was also branded as the dominant ideology of the now defunct imperial state, and hence all the more inapplicable to its successor. Those Chinese traveling to the United States were especially drawn to the study of the natural and social sciences, and to such obviously practical fields as engineering and agronomy. Once having mastered these new skills, they felt, they could return to China and begin the complex task of rebuilding China's economy and educational system from the ground up. It was obvious that the United States, although such a relatively new society, had achieved prosperity through encouraging capitalism, and social cohesion by guaranteeing democratic rights to all citizens (however flawed the electoral process might appear on occasion). At the same time, the weakness and lack of cohesion among the Chinese immigrants to the United States, who were often restricted to their "Chinatown" enclaves by discriminatory legislation, and who seemed incapable of functioning as fully active members of American society, were chastening. They suggested a deeper cultural

malaise in the race as a whole, one that might have to be addressed through radical or even revolutionary transformation. The very idea of "race" in this sense was itself a foreign concept, one that had to be grafted onto earlier Chinese ideas of the folk, the lineage, or the community. But clearly that foreign concept was a part of the world in which China must henceforth live. Those returning from the United States with their new skills were well prepared to tackle specific problem areas in industry, scientific development, or finance, but less certain of how to reform the deeper levels of society as a whole.

Chinese students traveling to France, though few in number, seemed to find in the French intellectual tradition a sharper sense of guidance. Perhaps this stemmed in part from the profound and passionate debates over social organization that had preceded and accompanied the French Revolution. Perhaps it stemmed also from the fact that France had become the haven—even before the Qing fall—for a small group of Chinese drawn to the ideas of anarchism, with its emphasis on mutual aid and the erasing of distinctions between clans, that had been preached by Kropotkin and Bakunin. The anarchists' message was especially attractive to those seeking fundamental solutions for China, and in the absence of either a strong Chinese socialist party or any widespread knowledge of Marxism, anarchist publications and communities found a considerable following. These early Chinese drawn to anarchism were followed by well over a thousand Chinese students who came to France after the end of World War I in 1918, many of them on government-sponsored work-study programs. The context was now radically different from that of a few years before, since not only had the horrors of World War I seemed to expose a fundamental weakness in the West's vaunted humanism, but also the 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia inspired a new interest in Marxist theories and their Leninist organizational implementation.

Fatefully, many future leaders of Chinese Communism shared in the post-war contact with France: Mao Zedong was led to Marxism-Leninism in large part by corresponding with some of his

closest friends from Hunan who were in France in 1919 and 1920; and Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping were among the Chinese in Paris at this same time. But in the context of aesthetics, the equally important impact of France on China came through painting and poetry, as the Chinese reared at home on translations of French Realist and Romantic literature and poetry, or on reproductions of French Classical and Impressionist painting, encountered in a mind-enchanting whirl the new vistas of Cubism, Surrealism, and Symbolism.

To come back home to China with such knowledge was at once uplifting and disheartening. For how were the new insights to be incorporated in a world as fragmented as China had grown by the mid-1920s? Much of the country was still controlled by warlords, the republican government structure was in disarray, and the Nationalist Party founded by Sun Yat-sen—and taken over after Sun's death by Chiang Kai-shek—was first in uneasy alliance and then, after 1927, in deadly conflict with the Chinese Communist party, which had been formally founded in 1921. In such a world, to be too imbued with foreign ideas made one an obvious outsider; only in the specially privileged purlieus of the few big cities that had taken on the veneer of modernism had the concepts of public exhibitions, dealers, and salons established a precarious foothold. But to be untouched by foreign ideas and influences threatened to tie one to a sterile traditionalism, for the great mainstream pageant of Chinese painting was now excoriated by many as one more hated remnant of a "feudal" past.

Some creative Chinese artists could still find their home in rigid adherence either to the realist genre of Western oil painting or to classical brush techniques, and they taught in academies devoted to one or the other. But many chose a compromise solution, as can be seen in the crowded pages of the many new illustrated weekly or monthly magazines that became such a feature of Chinese life in the late 1920s and the 1930s. Here, reproduced in miniature, one could experience at regular intervals the whole swirl of doubt and accomplishment in the art world of the time. The viewing context is also revealing of social and intellectual

modes; for the paintings now seen so regularly by the casual viewer were tucked neatly between photos of Chinese athletes (both men and women), of pinups and film stars (both Chinese and foreign), of the popular generals and politicians of the day, and of vigorously direct, often sexually loaded advertisements for everything from milk products and cigarettes to bedroom suites and luxury liners.

The nature of the advertising and its easily absorbed impact provide a good index of the changing pressures within Chinese society. By 1928, the Nationalists of Chiang Kai-shek appeared in the ascendant, and China was by its governments' avowal embarked on a process of commercial and economic growth and administrative renewal. The Nationalists accepted foreign models and foreign advisory personnel in their military reorganization, their police forces, their banking systems, and their rail and domestic airlines networks. Yet much of the countryside—especially the border areas between two provincial jurisdictions, or isolated mountain regions—was controlled by insurgent Communist forces of varying levels of strength. Having failed to take over the labor movement and the major industrial cities along lines laid out for them by their Leninist (and, later, Stalinist) political advisers, the Chinese Communists had pragmatically developed theories of land reform, rural social organization, and mass peasant mobilization backed by guerrilla strategies of warfare. This combination made it both militarily difficult and financially ruinous for Chiang Kai-shek to eradicate them completely. To compound China's problems, Japan's aggression was now flagrant. Japan had, between 1931 and 1934, taken over most of Manchuria and established a puppet state there, and was also enforcing a so-called "demilitarized zone" across much of north China. In 1932 their troops also invaded Shanghai. Chiang Kai-shek, anxious to buy time to destroy the Communists, had to give in to the ongoing Japanese demands until he could ready his own forces. There was perhaps logic to this procedure, but it was violently opposed among his own people, especially the more nationalistic students and intellectuals.

These social and military pressures

had their own impact on the art world. Much art had taken on the dimension of propaganda, and the cheaper forms of mass-produced graphics were especially well structured to make maximum use of these opportunities. In newspapers and magazines, the cartoon swiftly drawn using conventional brush-and-ink techniques could have an immediate approving or satiric impact, or deflate political pomposity with an irreverence that the official censors might be slow to catch. Simple captions could enhance the effect, but were not always necessary. If the audience were illiterate, the captions would in any case be useless, and this was doubly true for inflammatory political messages, whether directed against the Japanese or against the Nationalists, where the effectiveness of the message lay in its starkness and simplicity. Here, Chinese graphic artists soon saw the effectiveness of the monochrome woodblock print, for the woodblock allowed swift and cheap duplication, and the individual tear sheets could be easily handed out at meetings or rallies, or even scattered randomly into the streets from neighboring buildings; police found it difficult to anticipate such maneuvers, to apprehend the distributors, or to track down the locations where the simple prints were being made.

By the time that full-scale war with Japan erupted in 1937, the idea of art-as-propaganda was fully embraced by both Nationalists and Communists, the former in their wartime base at Chongqing, far up the Yangzi River, and the latter in the barren northern area of China within the curve of the Yellow River, centered on Yan'an. For both these regimes—committed to fighting Japan together, yet equally anticipating renewed internal conflict once Japan was defeated—the war did not allow aesthetic ambiguity. Thus, those who were the most strongly drawn to Western artistic forms, along with those who clung most tenaciously to traditional Chinese genres, often found their most natural home in the limbo-world of the Japanese occupied areas, which covered most of north China, the Yangzi region from Shanghai and Nanjing to Wuchang, and a large area around Canton, including (after 1941) Hong Kong. Here their commitment to one or the other of the

aesthetic schools was less likely to be misinterpreted as a political statement and could be seen for what it was—as the personal expression of an inner vision.

During the war years between 1937 and 1945, although the Nationalists in Chongqing were zealous in spreading their own ideology, they lacked the means to do so effectively. This was not true for the Communists, who, from their Yan'an base across the guerrilla areas that they controlled, imposed a tight ideological version of cultural correctness. In the most famous formulation of this, expressed at the 1942 Yan'an forum on literature and arts, Mao Zedong and other Communist leaders harped on the theme that, when dealing with class warfare or foreign imperialism, ambiguities in the field of aesthetics were impermissible. Shaded characterizations were unacceptable in such settings—the good landlord or the compassionate Japanese officer were contradictions in terms. Similarly, poor peasants and Red Army soldiers must be portrayed as noble and good.

Moreover, inherent virtue and wisdom could be discerned within the cultural products of such untutored masses: their styles of representation might seem naïve to city-bred intellectuals, but in essence they were pure and honest. It was in this sense that artists of true revolutionary potential could constantly “learn from the masses.” When some Chinese intellectuals protested these characterizations, they were vigorously confronted in group meetings, to which the name “struggle session” was aptly given. Those reluctant to change their ways, or who continued to ask awkward questions, could be dismissed from the party and sent to learn from the people, or given harsher punishments.

Yan'an was indeed a base for military and political organization against the Japanese occupation in north China, and many Red Army units and their peasant supporters fought with great courage and often suffered hideously from Japanese reprisals. Yet at the same time Yan'an was the focus for Mao Zedong's concentrations of power within the party into his own hands, and the scene of his calculated and skillful construction of his persona as close-to-omnipotent revolution-

ary leader. Under the careful monitoring of Mao's close disciples, the checkered history of the Communist party in China since 1921 became a paean to Mao's political acuity. A party history was constructed that presented all key moments of doubt or controversy as struggles between “two lines”; when “correctly” interpreted, it could be seen that Mao's decisions on the direction the party should take, whether in the darkest year of 1927, in the peasant mobilizations and rural soviet-building that followed, in the Long March to the north during 1934–1935, and within Yan'an itself, had been the ones that led to success.

Mao's role as cultural arbiter was an important part of this restructuring of the past; for instance, at the Yan'an forum, Mao praised the writer Lu Xun for being one of the party's most important backers and intellectual standard-bearers until his death in 1936, a man who had always been willing to “serve the people.” In this analysis, although Lu Xun had never joined the Communist party, and indeed protested vigorously against the cultural restrictions placed on free literary expression by the League of Left Wing Writers in the 1930s, what mattered was that he intuitively saw the value of art produced by the masses, and thus had become a major collector, publisher, and sponsor of the woodblock art for the time. Conversely, a roster of cultural opponents—initially mainly writers, but later to include musicians, film makers, dramatists, and painters—was drawn up, to be used for heuristic or polemical purposes as the need might arise.

Notwithstanding the long agony that China had experienced since 1937, the Nationalists and the Communists resumed their hostilities soon after the Japanese surrendered in September 1945. With only short periods of negotiation—some under the proddings of President Truman's emissary George Marshall—the civil war was fought with increasing bitterness and intensity until the Communist victory in the fall of 1949. The Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek retreated to Taiwan, which became the base of their government in exile. For several years the Nationalists under Chiang had claimed to be the protectors of the true legacy of China's past, and thus tra-

ditional calligraphy and painting—like classical scholarship—were publicly encouraged. Some Chinese artists found Taiwan a good place to work; at least there they were free from the constant instability that had been their lot on the mainland. Others found little to attract them either in Taiwan or under the new Communist mainland regime, but were unwilling to give up a Chinese environment altogether for a home in the West. For them, Hong Kong became home, even if still under the colonial rule of the British, who (against the odds) had reestablished their claim to the island and the new territories in late 1945. Hong Kong, free intellectually and artistically, became a good base not only for those who wished to pursue traditional art forms, but for those who wished to explore the many currents of art inherited from the West or the new trends coming to the fore in Europe and the United States.

In China between 1949 and the mid-1950s the Communists focused mainly on reestablishing political control, confirming the borders, and rebuilding the economy, but nevertheless cultural control was tight. Especially once the Korean War broke out in 1950, the Yan'an message of 1942 was reaffirmed, and the strong influence of the Soviet Union on China meant that Yan'an theories were now wedded to Stalinist ideas on the permissible forms of Socialist-Realist art and that both were reinforced through the realities of mass campaigns. In China this could lead either to straightforward imitation of Soviet styles and content, or to an admixture of traditional Chinese aesthetic forms with "correct" interpretative techniques in representing Mao, the party, or the masses.

A temporary relaxation of party ideological control came to China in 1957, during the Hundred Flowers campaign, when intellectuals were encouraged to speak out against perceived abuses in the party and the bureaucracy. But the ensuing harsh crackdown known as the "anti-rightist" campaign was directed not only against those who had been overzealous in responding to the party's requests for frank criticism. It was aimed also at those in the cultural world whose own earlier works could be seen—under the stern scrutiny of the new political dis-

pensation—to have fallen short of the party's commands. This retroactive criticism hit film makers, writers, and artists especially hard. Many who had made no critical statements, aesthetic or otherwise, during the Hundred Flowers campaign, found themselves forced out of the comfortable niches they had created for themselves in revolutionary China, and were sent into long periods of exile in the countryside, with no clear statement of when forgiveness might come, or even how atonement could be made. The muting of courage and initiative that followed was patent; and during the excited and ultimately disastrous years of the Great Leap Forward (1958–1962), and the even more culturally intrusive years of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), only circumscribed forms of artistic expression were allowed at all. During the Cultural Revolution especially, the smallest mistake in the rendering of an image, such as an imagined slight to Chairman Mao or Lin Biao—for example, the color black where red "should" have been used, or the absence of an icon of socialist industrialization in a landscape—could mean disaster for the artist. Even painting or writing in secret was almost impossible, because Red Guard units might invade one's home or studio at any time of the day or night. Aesthetic accomplishments were still possible—to a few exceptionally talented and courageous individuals—but they put the creator at risk.

One paradox of the Cultural Revolution was that long before it was officially over, major shifts in culture had begun. These proceeded directly from the visit of President Nixon to Chairman Mao in 1972, and the cautious yet insistent pattern of cultural contacts that flowed from that meeting. Ambiguous though the Shanghai Communiqué might have been in geopolitical terms, the mere fact that it became safe to correspond with persons in the West, that Western tourist groups were encouraged to visit China, that Western scholars could not only visit China but in some cases stay for long periods, and that selected Chinese scholars could now visit the West all meant that the flow of ideas and images recommenced. Like the visits of Chinese intellectuals to France from the late Qing to

the early 1920s, the lowering of barriers worked to end a pattern of constriction and to unleash of the potential for profound cultural transformation. In the 1970s the impact of the written word was fairly muted, since Western fiction and in some ways even poetry were (apart from the permitted range of sexually explicit subject matter) recognizably what they had been in the 1950s. But in theater, cinema, dance, and the visual arts, the changes were overwhelming. And just like their predecessors sixty years before, the Chinese of the mid-1970s encountered this torrent of novelty all at once, without warning, and without any clear guidelines as to levels of significance or the making of fine distinctions.

The consolidation of this period of renewed openness is often dated to the celebrated Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee, which took place in late 1978. During this Plenum, where Deng Xiaoping was clearly in control, following the brief political eclipse into which he had fallen just before Mao's death in 1976, the leadership firmly confronted the need to transform the collective structures of the Chinese economy, to pay more attention to education, to proceed to full diplomatic recognition of the United States, to introduce legal reform, and to allow a certain amount of cultural "opening." One result of this latter decision, which soon gave the government pause, was the explosion of criticism and commentary that appeared on the celebrated Democracy Wall in Beijing between late 1978 and early 1979, and the accompanying mass of underground or informal magazines, pamphlets, and prints. In the spring of 1979 the government decided to halt this flood of information and opinion by forbidding the posting of writings on that stretch of the wall, and by arresting some outspoken critics of Deng Xiaoping and the party. These actions may have dampened enthusiasms, but could not suppress the principle of renewed expression. New kinds of poems continued to be written and circulated; the visual images that passed from hand to hand had culminative impact; small groups met to read innovative works aloud or to show paintings and sculptures that explored the farthest edges of the permissible.

This pattern continued through the 1980s, still on a zigzag course, as government warnings against license or official censure of extremist vices took the form of renewed campaigns, the names of which showed their general purpose. The campaigns against "bourgeois liberalization" or against "spiritual pollution" revived the ideas that art was a function of class and that some inner core of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism was essentially pure and eternally valid. At the same time, these assertions were never specific. Clearly there was some room for negotiation—which had not been true during the Great Leap or the Cultural Revolution and had been very difficult even in Yan'an. And these campaigns were usually inaugurated after some particular events had sharpened the levels of confrontation—as with the publication of certain poems of shadowy but undeniable hostility to the regime, the showing of films full of overt sensuality that roused disquieting echoes of past excesses, and installation of performance art that forced social and emotional confrontations with the political status quo. Such campaigns could also swing, as they had in the past, against hair or clothing styles, advertisements and magazine covers, dances and rock music. When linked to charges of "hooliganism," they could be directed against overt examples of democratic protest or demonstration, as had occurred in 1976 and 1978, and were to occur again in the winter of 1986–1987 and, far more dramatically (under the gaze of the whole world) in the spring of 1989.

Today, in the late 1990s, the brakes have been applied sparingly, and China seems poised to be a member of the world aesthetic scene in all the complex ramifications of such a term. The formal return of Hong Kong to Chinese control in July 1997 made this all the more probable, since Hong Kong's currents were already so global that they would be hard to still. And although the full implications of what a modern China will mean to the world are not yet clear, we can already see in myriad ways how individual Chinese partake with enthusiasm and sophistication of all the current options they are now allowed.

Innovations in Chinese Painting, 1850–1950

Painting of China's New Metropolis: The Shanghai School, 1850–1900

Shan Guolin, The Shanghai Museum

During the second half of the nineteenth century a group of particularly creative painters—known to modern art historians as the Shanghai school—transcended the boundaries of traditional Chinese art. Although their painting styles were not strictly similar, they had in common certain artistic concepts, types of subject matter, and formal experiments that defined a new artistic trend. The Shanghai school may be viewed as one response by the Chinese art world to the culture of modern urbanism.

Shanghai, surrounded by a fertile plain, is located at the mouth of the Yangzi River, with access to both the Pacific Ocean and the Grand Canal. When the Qing dynasty rulers opened China to international trade in 1684, the city became a very prosperous port. It remained so until 1757, when the government completely closed the coasts to foreigners, leaving Shanghai with only its domestic trade, and thus severely curtailed Shanghai's commerce and general development. It remained closed to foreign trade for more than eighty years; in 1843, following the Opium War, it was reopened as one of five treaty ports. Between 1845 and 1849 the British, Americans, and French successively established permanent control over large areas of Shanghai, which were referred to as foreign concessions, and then rapidly expanded the city's ocean and river shipping. By the 1850s a visitor to the city would have seen both banks of the Huangpu River crowded with foreign ships moored to unload their cargoes of opium, fabric, and cotton thread and to take on silver, silk, and tea for export.

In 1853 the army of the Taiping rebels occupied Nanjing and Yangzhou. In September of that year the Small Sword Society of Shanghai, echoing the larger rebellion, took control of sections of the Chinese city. The chaos of civil war throughout the lower Yangzi region led many wealthy Chinese merchants, landlords, and commoners to take refuge in the concession territories of Shanghai, swelling their population. In the same period the foreign powers expanded the concession territories, gradually established an extraterritorial administration with military, commercial, and legal structures, and even collected customs

duties themselves. Foreign business enterprises opened banks; built factories, bridges, and roads; and installed gas, electricity, and running water. By the beginning of the twentieth century Shanghai had been transformed from a small town into an international financial and commercial metropolis, and had become the largest city in China. And by 1914 Shanghai had expanded to almost thirty times its 1843 area, while its population had more than doubled, from 540,000 people in 1852 to 1.2 million in 1910.

In 1889 Wang Xieyun wrote in his *Songnan mengyinglu*: "Shanghai was originally a rustic, undeveloped place, but when so many wealthy merchants gathered there, they made frivolity the fashion and ostentation their achievement. With money as king, poetry and friendship fell away."¹ The uneven development of the economy and the exceptional growth of industry and commerce spurred urban consumption. Opium dens, casinos, brothels, and dance halls could be found throughout the city; bars, nightclubs, and racetracks proliferated. These establishments made Shanghai a metropolis of luxury and dissipation. At the same time Shanghai became a huge art market, in which the great range of social classes showed an equally wide range of tastes in art and culture. Zhang Mingke noted in *Hansongge tanyi suolu*: "After the treaty port was opened to trade, Shanghai became the most important commercial city [in China]. Those who made their livings by selling paintings all came to Shanghai."² According to *Songnan mengyinglu*, during the reign of the Guangxu emperor (1875–1908), "painters and calligraphers who migrated to Shanghai from other provinces numbered more than a hundred. The landscapists Hu Gongshou [Hu Yuan] and Yang Nanhu [Yang Borun]; figure painters Qian Jisheng [Qian Hui'an], Ren Fuchang [Ren Xun], Ren Bonian [Ren Yi], and Zhang Zhiyin; flower-and-bird painters Zhang Zixiang [Zhang Xiong] and Wei Zhijun; and the portrait painter Li Xiangeng all became very famous. People in Shanghai were proud to obtain their works."

As early as the Daoguang era (1821–1850), painting and calligraphy societies were set up in Shanghai. Gao Yong

wrote in his preface to *Haishang molin*, "In 1839 Jiang Baoling of Yushan came to Shanghai to spend the summer. He invited many famous people to Xiaopenglai where they painted and wrote calligraphy every day. This might be considered the prototype for later painting and calligraphy societies."⁴ The Xiaopenglai Painting Society, organized by Jiang Baoling, was indeed different from traditional literati or artists' gatherings, which had been, in effect, affinity groups devoted to socializing and recreation; Xiaopenglai functioned to bring together painters and calligraphers for mutual financial support (i.e., exchange of information about how and where to sell their work).⁵

The second half of the century saw the founding of a spate of artists' societies, testifying to the ferment of artistic activity in Shanghai. In 1862 Wu Zonglin of Qiantang (present-day Hangzhou) came to Shanghai and established the Duckweed Blossom Society for Painting and Calligraphy (*Pinghuashe shuhuahui*), which was located at the Temple of Lord Guan on the west side of the old Chinese city. The twenty-four founding members included Wu Dazheng, Gu Yun, Hu Yuan, Ni Tian, Qian Hui'an, Wu Qingyun, Tao Shaoyuan, Qin Bingwen, Wang Li, Zhou Xian, Bao Dong, and Zhu Cheng. During the second half of the nineteenth century the Feidan Pavilion Painting and Calligraphy Society (*Feidange shuhuahui*) met at the Deyuelou Restaurant in the Chinese city's Yu Garden. Many famous Shanghai painters joined this society, including Wang Li, Wu Qingyun, Hu Yuan, Yang Borun, Ren Yu, Zhang Xiong, Pu Hua, Wu Changshi, and Wu Jiayou. The Feidan Pavilion Painting and Calligraphy Society was not only an artists' association but also served as a shop for selling painting and calligraphy and as a hotel. In the mid-Guangxu era the Shanghai Tijinguan Epigraphy, Calligraphy, and Painting Society (*Haishang tijinguan jinshi shuhuahui*) was established, with Wang Xun as director and Wu Changshi as deputy director. It had a wide membership of professional painters, calligraphers, and seal carvers, and its activities included sharing painting techniques, judging the art works, setting prices for member-artists, and promoting sales of its members' paint-

ings. In other words, this group began to take on the character of a professional organization.

After about 1850 many painting and calligraphy societies established in Shanghai served as gathering places where artists could share and improve painting techniques, coordinate painting prices, and market their paintings. In addition, many painting-and-calligraphy and antique shops were established. They included the Deyuelou Fan Shop at the Yu Garden and the fan and stationery purveyors Scent of Antiquity Studio (*Guxiangshi*) and Nine Blossoms Hall (*Jiuhuatang*) on Guangdong Road. Painters such as Ren Xun, Xugu, Hu Yuan, and Ren Yi all sold their works at these fan shops.

The opening of Shanghai as a treaty port resulted in the rapid development of finance, industry, and commerce; a relatively stable and peaceful environment in the foreign concessions; and rapid expansion of material and cultural consumption by its urban residents. Such conditions created an environment conducive to the development of painting. The growing number of painting societies served as professional organizations for a growing number of artists, and the increasing number of art shops both signified and advanced the expanding art market. In this social setting the Shanghai school of painting emerged and developed.

Shanghai school painting may be regarded as evolving in three phases: the formative period, during the 1840s and 1850s, when the most representative artists were Zhu Xiong, Zhang Xiong, Ren Xiong, and Wang Li; the mature period, from 1860 to 1900, with Hu Yuan, Xugu, Zhu Cheng, Zhao Zhiqian, Pu Hua, Qian Hui'an, Ren Xun, and Ren Yi being its most important artists; and the late period, the first three decades of the twentieth century, during which Wu Changshi, Wu Qingyun, Gao Yong, Ni Tian, Ren Yu, and Wang Zhen were active.

With the opening of the treaty ports to foreign settlement and trade, Western culture gradually flowed into China. Western artistic forms, such as drawings, watercolors, prints, religious paintings, and commercial art (including printed matter) became widespread in the big cities. Some artists learned Western tech-



Figure 1-a. Zhang Xiong (1803–1886).
Leaf from Album of Flowers and Birds.
Undated. Ink and color on paper.
Shanghai Museum.



Figure 1-b. Zhang Xiong (1803–1886).
Leaf from Album of Flowers and Birds.
Undated. Ink and color on paper.
Shanghai Museum.



Figure 1-c. Zhang Xiong (1803–1886).
Leaf from Album of Flowers and Birds.
Undated. Ink and color on paper.
Shanghai Museum.

niques in order to create new types of art, for example, Wu Jiayou (also known as Wu Youru), who created the lithographs reproduced in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. Western-style art, however, was not yet a powerful trend. Indeed, traditional ink painting still dominated the main currents of Chinese art during the second half of the nineteenth century.

In its formative and mature periods Shanghai school painting built on tradition but also incorporated elements of urban culture, was nourished by epigraphy, calligraphy, and folk art, and adopted some technical features of Western-style painting. The Shanghai school thus brought about innovation and reform, establishing novel artistic styles and bringing fresh vigor to traditional painting. By the beginning of the twentieth century the art world, in step with intellectual currents advocating “science and democracy,” rallied to the slogan “Reform Chinese painting.” Study of Western artistic techniques and styles quickly proliferated, and it was fashionable for painters to study in Europe and Japan. As new mediums—such as oil painting, prints, watercolors, and cartoons—appeared in China, the domination of the Chinese art world by traditional ink painting was broken. During its late period, although the Shanghai school was esteemed in the art world for its innovations, it could not claim to represent the main trend of Chinese painting. In this century, as the art world entered a new phase of multidirectional and pluralistic exploration, Chinese painting underwent a rapid transformation from the classical tradition to modern art. One must conclude that Shanghai school painting made its greatest contribution in its formative and mature periods.

Among Shanghai school painters of the formative and mature phases, Ren Xiong, Xugu, Zhao Zhiqian, Ren Xun, and Ren Yi were undoubtedly the most creative. The present exhibition, which includes major works by these masters, thus gives viewers a clear idea of the dominant artistic trend during the second half of the nineteenth century. By examining transformations of artistic concepts, forms, and styles, we may consider Shanghai school painting under several important aspects.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN URBAN PAINTING IN CHINA

It was inevitable that the urbanization of Shanghai’s cultural, social, economic, and political environment would influence the direction of painting’s development in the city. A group of artists who responded to the needs of this new society began to transcend the boundaries of traditional painting by seeking new meanings, content, and expressive forms. Zhang Xiong, Zhu Xiong, and Ren Xiong (referred to collectively as the “Three Xions”) were pioneers of this new painting style.

Zhang Xiong (1803–1886), also known by his by-name (*zi*) Zixiang, was a native of Jiaxing in Zhejiang Province.⁴ He gained his reputation as an artist for his flower paintings and based his style on those of the Ming artist Zhou Zhimian and the Qing painters Yun Shouping, Wang Wu, and Jiang Tingxi, combining the techniques of these masters. His accomplished brushwork was stable but free, his compositions were orderly and well balanced, and his palette was dazzling (figs. 1a–1d). Thus, while retaining the elegance of literati painting, his work achieved a new and seductive charm. He moved to Shanghai relatively early and established a significant reputation in the city. As one commentator noted, “One Zhang Xiong fan was worth [a unit of silver], and his high prices astonished and impressed his contemporaries,”⁵ making him the leader of the emigré artists in Shanghai.

In Shanghai, Zhang Xiong became the teacher of his fellow townsmen, the brothers Zhu Xiong (1801–1864)⁶ and Zhu Cheng (1826–1900). Zhu Xiong’s flower painting was fresh, bright, and technically controlled but more spontaneous in style than that of Zhang Xiong (figs. 2a–2b). Zhu Cheng’s painting style incorporated the elegance of Zhang Xiong and the power of his subsequent teacher Wang Li and won him a great following in Shanghai.

Wang Li (1813–1879) was a native of Wujiang in Jiangsu Province.⁸ On first arriving in Shanghai, he was unknown, but Zhang Xiong’s commendations brought him almost instant fame. His painting style was elegant, powerful, and free (fig. 3). Zhang Xiong, Zhu Xiong,



Figure 1-d. Zhang Xiong (1803-1886).
Leaf from Album of Flowers and Birds.
Undated. Ink and color on paper.
Shanghai Museum.



Figure 2-a. Zhu Xiong (1801-1864). Album
of Flowers. Undated. Ink and color on
paper. Shanghai Museum.

Wang Li, and Zhu Cheng, all emigré artists in Shanghai, based their flower styles on the conventions of the Ming dynasty Wu school and the Qing dynasty Yun Shouping school, with resemblances also to such masters as Xi Gang and Zhu Angzhi. These early masters of the Shanghai school surpassed their models in the vitality of their flower-and-bird images, as well as in the power and freedom of their brushwork. Their color, in particular, was much brighter and fresher than that in earlier painting. Such differences indicate that these artists aimed more at immediate visual impact and were less interested in the symbolism and the poetic qualities to be found in standard literati painting. Although these changes in creative attitude and aesthetic taste were largely intuitive, they reflected a shift in artistic fashion that undoubtedly prepared the ground for the formation of the Shanghai school of painting.

The brothers Ren Xiong (1823-1857) and Ren Xun (1835-1893) are representative of early Shanghai school artists who vernacularized and popularized painting. Ren Xiong, often known by his by-name Weichang, was born to a family of modest means in Xiaoshan, Zhejiang Province.⁹ From a very early age he loved art. A schoolmaster with whom he studied poetry and the Classics gave him his first lessons in portraiture. He also liked horseback riding, archery, and wrestling. During the chaotic years of the late Qing dynasty it was considered necessary to know both the Classics and martial arts in order to serve society. When he was thirty-three, he went to Nanjing at the recommendation of his good friend Zhou Xian, for what proved to be a brief stint as a military strategist with the Qing army.

From an early age he painted in the style of the Ming dynasty artist Chen Hongshou, and sold his paintings to support his mother and siblings. In 1846 he copied rubbings taken from the famous relief carvings of the *Sixteen Arhats* in Hangzhou, which were believed to be based on Buddhist paintings by the ninth-century artist Guanyu. The process of copying taught him to understand the antique simplicity of their brushwork. In 1848 he met the Jiaxing painter Zhou Xian and lived for three years in Zhou



Figure 2-b. Zhu Xiong (1801-1864). Album
of Flowers. Undated. Ink and color on
paper. Shanghai Museum.

Xian's studio, known as the Fanhu Thatched Cottage (*Fanhu caotang*), where he made numerous copies of Tang and Song paintings. Surviving examples of these include copies of the Tang period *Court Ladies Tuning a Lute* and *Playing the Lute*, and the Song period *Landscape After an Academy Master*.¹⁰ His painting style is thus based on that of Chen Hongshou and on his studies of Tang and Song paintings. He may also have been influenced by woodcuts of his native Zhejiang area, as suggested by his emphasis on line and his simple, strange, archaic-looking images. His styles differed strikingly from the early Qing orthodox manner.

Ren Xiong's style of figure painting, though strongly influenced by that of Chen Hongshou, is less bizarre than that of his seventeenth-century predecessor. His lines are strong and forceful, like iron wire, and his forms are exaggerated to emphasize the character and emotion of the subject. This style is apparent in his portrait paintings, including *Self-Portrait* (cat. 1). Here he has rejected the Ming-Qing genre of "literati amusements" as a setting for his portrait. He has eliminated the customary garden or studio background, giving the entire pictorial space to his figure, and far from portraying himself in a mood and pose of relaxation, appears both taut and stern. In other words, in this self-portrait he has presented himself as a nonconformist. Ren Xiong was short and unprepossessing, but he intentionally exaggerated the power and muscularity of his physique and his icily serious expression in order



Figure 3. Wang Li (1813–1879). Peony and Magpies. 1877. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper. Shanghai Museum.

to express a determined, direct personality—a depiction that fits Ren Xiong's forthright and resolute character. The lines that describe the drapery folds in this painting are firm and powerful, and reinforce the monumental solemnity of the portrait. Ren Xiong's artistic techniques are straightforward and simple, creating a visual immediacy very close to that of the folk prints that his figural images sometimes resemble. His new manner of portrait painting strongly influenced the later Shanghai school artist Ren Yi (also called Ren Bonian; 1840–1895), who adopted similar compositional conventions in his *Hengyun Shanmin* (Hu Yuan) as a Beggar of 1868, *The Shabby Official* (cat. 12), and his 1883 portrait of Wu Changshi entitled *Master of the Wujing Pavilion*.

Ren Xiong's body of work includes many images from ancient legends and historical tales. In all of them the setting is concrete and detailed, the composition is clear, and the personalities of the characters are readable and vivid. Ren Xiong also painted designs for several series of prints, including *Lierian jiupai* ("Drinking Cards with Illustrations of the 48 Immortals"; cat. 4), *Gaoshi zhuan* ("Stories of Eminent Scholars"), *Yuyue xianxian xiangzan* ("Portraits of Ancient Sages"), and *Jianxia xiangzhuan* ("Portraits of Knights Errant"), thus participating directly in the creation of popular printed art.

Ren Xiong's unique landscape paintings also broke the bounds of convention. The handscroll *The Fanhu Cottage Estate* (*Fanhu caotang tu*) that he painted for his friend, the painter Zhou Xian, is a good example. By selecting and emphasizing certain elements of the actual scene, he created a monumental image that still has a strong rustic flavor. The colors are brilliant yet dense, strikingly juxtaposed yet still harmonious. Though strongly decorative, the painting conveys a feeling of immediacy, as of a realm one could physically enter. This masterpiece rejects the conventions of early Qing orthodoxy, utilizing new kinds of composition and form to provide a fresh visual experience.¹¹

The grandly titled *Ten Myriads* album (cat. 2-j) is another work without precedent. Many of the landscape leaves are

rendered as though in close-up, and the compositions are strikingly uncomplicated. For example, "Myriad Valleys with Competing Streams" (cat. 2-j) depicts only a detail of a single valley, but there, among the sharply jutting rocks, rivulets burst from the mountain and then merge to form a mighty stream. The scene as rendered may be limited in scope, but it leaves in the viewer's imagination a vision of many rivers and waterfalls simultaneously pouring down mountain ravines.

Other innovative characteristics of this album are its strongly decorative quality and its emphasis on abstract formal beauty. The rainy clouds, stylized wave patterns, and layers of soaring peaks in "Myriad Bamboo in Misty Rain" (cat. 2-a) and "Myriad Scepters Worshipping Heaven" (cat. 2-d) do not appear in the natural world. They are a language of signs constructed by the artist, who created an imaginary world through the rhythmic harmonies of his parallel structures of lines and forms.

Ren Xiong brushed the crisp images and dazzling chromatic tones of *The Ten Myriads* onto a gold-leafed ground. To this he applied strong lines of ink and bright mineral pigments, including azurite, malachite, red ocher, cinnabar, mineral blue, and white lead. The painting surface itself reflects a taste for wealth and abundance. His bold use of brilliant colors flouted the literati canons of blandness and subtlety. In exploiting the brightness and sensual quality of color, Ren was, to some degree, reflecting the craving of rich Shanghai merchants for conspicuous consumption—a craving that partly shaped the aesthetic trends of newly urbanized Shanghai. It is not an accident that when Ren Xiong was in Shanghai many merchants bought his paintings at high prices.

Ren Xiong was a professional painter with a classical education. Some of his work therefore contains literati symbolism or poetic meanings; but the pursuit of lively, plebeian, and easily comprehensible artistic effects was always the primary motive of his style. In the album *After the Poems of Yao Xie* (cat. 3) Ren combined these two elements in his characteristic manner. That extraordinary album was painted in the winter of 1850,

when the painter lived for about two months in the home of the famous poet and calligrapher Yao Xie. During that time Yao Xie composed poetry for the 120-leaf work, while Ren Xiong painted the images. The album's subject matter includes figures, ghosts, divinities, landscapes, auspicious creatures, flowers-and-birds, fish and insects, and architectural scenes. Every composition was carefully conceived, with unconventional and original results.

Some of the leaves are poetically allusive or charged with literary connotations. For example, the leaf entitled "Birds in Mist" depicts a hummingbird and reeds as seen through a bamboo screen (cat. 3-2b). It perfectly conveys the poetic meaning of Yao Xie's accompanying couplet: "Small birds fly in smoky mist. Fine weeds are dense like rabbit fur." At the same time, it suggests the subtle implications beyond the actual meanings of the words. Throughout the album scenic atmosphere has been used in this way to convey poetic resonance.

In contrast, most of the leaves, especially those depicting figures and deities, are stylistically simple, direct, and easy to understand. Some leaves obviously adopt artistic forms from popular iconography or folk prints. "Heavenly Troops Search the Mountains for Hidden Demons" (cat. 3-4l) is a good example. The subject is common in painting of the Yuan and Ming periods, but in "Heavenly Troops" the battles between axe-wielding heavenly warriors and fierce demons take place in midair, amid tumbling clouds and crashing lightning, while the defeated demons attempt to flee below. The painting is filled with intense action and resonates with suspense and a powerful mythological flavor. Other examples, such as "Bao Cilong Presenting the Text at the Lingxiao Palace" and "The Twelve Deities of Thunder Gate" (cats. 3-4f and 3-4e), are similar to the illustrations and imaginary group portraits often seen in prints.

The paintings in this album are also highly decorative. The effect of the "Five-Colored Butterfly" (cat. 3-2a), in which a huge butterfly contrasts with small flowers on the cliff, is simple and clear, like a traditional Chinese cut-paper design. A similarly decorative quality is present in

the rocky hills, spindly trees, and rising sun of "Woman Under a Sapling in Dawn Light" (cat. 3-4a). Ren Xiong painted the album *After the Poems of Yao Xie* when he was in his late twenties. It reveals his artistic influences, especially the work of Chen Hongshou, as well as the very refined painting techniques of Tang and Song painters, and the free, loose brushwork of the eighteenth-century Yangzhou master Hua Yan. Most notable, however, is his adaptation of the manner of folk prints in his compositions and in his figural images. As a result, the themes of this album tend to be more clearly readable and easily understood than they are in the restrained painting of the literati. Ren Xiong's brushwork is simple and plain, descriptive rather than calligraphic. In fact, Ren Xiong is important for his departure from the elitist ink play of the literati in favor of a style that could be appreciated by popular taste. Although his brief lifespan—he died aged thirty-four years—prevented him from establishing a new style for his own generation, his influence on later members of the Shanghai school is undeniable.

Ren Xiong taught painting to his younger brother Ren Xun, known often by his by-name Fuchang.¹² Ren Xun's early work, which followed the style of Chen Hongshou, was highly decorative, particularly his outline flower-and-bird paintings and his exaggerated figural images. His brushwork was more elegant and less powerful than that of his brother. In the latter half of his life he lived in Suzhou, center of Wu school painting, and absorbed influences of that school. He created his own style of flower-and-bird painting, combining a harmonious palette with ever finer and more elegant brushwork that mingles elements of expressionistic free brush (*xieyi*) painting with finely detailed (*gongbi*) painting. He shared Ren Xiong's pursuit of vivid subject matter and clear characterization. His twelve-leaf illustration to the drama *Romance of the Western Chamber* (cat. 5) is a typical example.

In the late Ming dynasty Chen Hongshou had designed illustrations for a printed version of *Romance of the Western Chamber* that has been recognized as a masterpiece of woodblock illustration. It was not easy for Ren Xun to surpass his

predecessor, but with careful thought he was able to make an original interpretation of the literary classic. In Chen Hongshou's illustration to *Romance of the Western Chamber*, emotions are depicted with restraint. His "Receiving a Letter" depicts Cui Yingying carefully reading a poem from her lover Zhang Sheng. Her expression betrays a delicate hint of embarrassment. Hongniang, her servant, peeks at her from behind a four-panel flower-and-bird screen. This compositional arrangement subtly represents the psychological state of the two figures, while at the same time creating a very decorative effect.

In contrast, Ren Xun's "Waiting" (cat. 5c) depicts Zhang Sheng sitting in a melancholic state at his desk, resting his chin in his hand. Hongniang, hesitant to approach him, holds Yingying's letter and a round fan. She does not understand the real meaning of Yingying's response, and cannot bear bringing what she believes to be bad news. Zhang Sheng's lovesickness and Hongniang's mistaken pity are depicted in great detail, and combine with the elegant setting of Zhang Sheng's studio to make the story extremely clear and readable. Although Ren Xun's interpretation of the classic is more easily comprehensible than that of Chen Hongshou, it is by no means superficial. By means of his skillful and elegant outline technique Ren brought the personalities and the emotions of the characters vividly to life.

Famous throughout the Zhejiang and Jiangsu regions, Ren Xun taught or inspired both Ren Yi and Ren Yu and many other disciples in Ningbo and Suzhou. The most creative was his direct student Ren Yi, who later became the leader of the Shanghai school. Thus, Ren Xun was instrumental in disseminating his brother's contributions and infusing them into the developing urban, plebeian painting style.

Ren Yi (1840–1895), who is most often known by his by-name of Bonian, was a native of Shanyin (present-day Shaoxing) in Zhejiang Province.¹³ The family was poor. His father, Ren Hesheng, was a folk portrait painter who taught his son the outline technique of portrait drawing. Ren Yi began painting for his living in the Shaoxing area in 1860. The following

year he is believed to have been drafted into the Taiping rebel army as a flag bearer, but he remained with the rebels only briefly. Many tales have been recorded about his youth and about how he learned to paint. The most colorful of these anecdotes has him copying Ren Xiong's paintings and successfully passing them off as originals to buyers on the streets of Shanghai; on discovering this, Ren Xiong recognized Ren Yi's talent and accepted him as a disciple. This story, however, cannot be true, because Ren Xiong died in 1857, when Ren Yi was only seventeen. Historical records reveal no evidence of a relationship between the two men.

Ren Yi's teacher when he was young was Ren Xun; their association, contrary to common belief, began not when Ren Yi moved to Ningbo in 1865, but at least one year earlier. This writer has discovered that a fan painting of flowers, now in the Shanghai Museum, was executed collaboratively by Ren Xun, Ren Yi, Zhu Xiong, Yuan Qichao, Wei Zijun, and Zou Zongyao. On this work Ren Yi signed his name as Ren Xiaolou. Since Zhu Xiong died in 1864, the painting cannot have been executed later than that year. Yuan Qichao and Wei Zijun lived in Suzhou, where Zhu Xiong and Ren Xun were also very active. On this evidence, we may assume that the fan painting was made in Suzhou and that Ren Yi already knew Ren Xun and Zhu Xiong before he was twenty-four. He may also have begun studying painting with Ren Xun at that time.

In 1865 Ren Yi traveled to Ningbo and Zhenhai (in Zhejiang Province) to sell his paintings. We know that Ren Xun was also active in the Ningbo–Zhenhai area at about the same time. Ren Xun may have suggested the trip to Ren Yi or, even more directly, the two men may have made the trip together. In March 1868 Ren Yi and Ren Xun—pupil and teacher—left Ningbo and returned to Suzhou together. In the winter of the same year Ren Yi moved to Shanghai, where he remained and lived by selling his paintings.

A statement published in a miscellany of 1875,¹⁴ extolling the paintings of both Ren Xiong and Ren Yi, makes clear that Ren Yi had earned a reputation in Shanghai by the time he was in his thirties. In his late years, "his reputation was

equal to Hu Gongshou's."¹⁰ He and Hu Yuan (Hu Gongshou: 1823–1886) were considered the leading Shanghai painters.

Ren Yi was extremely intelligent and hard-working, so that his artistic development was very rapid. He specialized in figure painting, portraits, flowers-and-birds, insects, and landscapes, but his portrait painting was particularly appreciated by his contemporaries. Zhang Mingke states: "Ren Bonian was a specialist in portraits in the *baimiao* (ink outline, without color or wash) style. At that time many people asked him to paint portraits, and all were close likenesses of the sitters." In his early years his portraits followed his father's folk technique. Later he was influenced by Ren Xun's style and adopted his outline technique. In Shanghai he came to understand some of the strengths of Western art. He studied at the Painting Studio of the Xujiahui Catholic church at Tushanwan; there, it is said, his studies included life drawing. In his portrait painting of the Shanghai period (post-1868) one can see a new manner that combines Chinese and Western techniques. A typical example is his *Portrait of Gao Yong* (cat. 8), a good friend, painted in 1877. He used a firm line to outline the figure's facial features, including the prominent contours of Gao's brow, nose, and jawbone. Washes of light ink and tan pigment define the eye socket, cheek muscles, cheekbone, and neck tendon. Without training in drawing and anatomy, it is unlikely that Ren Yi could have rendered the facial structure so precisely and conveyed such a strong impression of volume and likeness. At the same time, he has fully expressed the magnanimous and self-possessed character of his friend.

Thus we see that, while preserving the traditional outline technique of Chinese painting, Ren Yi also adopted Western anatomical conventions. His synthesis of Chinese and Western techniques was far more harmonious than those of such predecessors as the Jesuit Giuseppe Castiglione and his Chinese followers in the mid-Qing period. Ren Yi, then, simultaneously breached the boundaries of tradition and preserved the unique formal beauty of Chinese painting. In the period before photography was widespread, his realistic portrait technique naturally was

very popular, as his many surviving portraits dating to the 1870s and 1880s attest.

Also characteristic of Ren Yi's portrait painting was its acute rendering of the psychological state of the sitter. In 1888 he painted a portrait of the scholar Wu Changshi. *In the Cool Shade of the Banana Tree* (cat. 13), in which Wu Changshi, seated obliquely on a bamboo bench and naked from the waist up, waves a palm-leaf fan. This kind of portrait defies the traditions of Chinese portraiture, in which the subject is rendered frontally, fully clothed, and in an unnaturally formal posture. Ren painted the real Wu Changshi, indifferent to appearances, concerned only with cooling off at the height of the summer heat.

Another excellent portrait of Wu Changshi, *The Shabby Official* (cat. 12), painted in the same year, is a profound depiction of the sitter's psychological state. Not long before the portrait was painted, Wu Changshi had served as a low-level government clerk in Suzhou. Although Ren Yi has painted Wu Changshi in his official uniform, there is nothing dignified about his appearance. On the contrary, Wu appears awkward and unsure of himself. The portraitist has here satirized his old friend, albeit good-naturedly. In this regard Wu Changshi himself wrote: "I knew my pathetic demeanor, and feared I would provoke the anger of my superiors." Compared with Ren's earlier portraits, *In the Cool Shade of the Banana Tree* and *The Shabby Official* show a simplified outline technique; nonetheless, a few sketchy strokes have accurately rendered facial features, anatomical structure, and, most effectively, Wu Changshi's frame of mind. The voluminous robes of *The Shabby Official*, painted with a loose brush, are thick, evoking the heavy heart of the sitter.

Chinese figure painting went through a two-hundred-year period of decline in the early and middle Qing periods (roughly 1650–1850), but its prestige and quality were restored by Ren Yi. He expanded and developed its subject matter by depicting historical figures, myths and legends, contemporary customs, Buddhist and Daoist deities, demons, and other themes. He illustrated anecdotes admired by the literati, such as *Xie An Playing the Qin at East Mountain*, *Ji Dao Composing a Poem*



Figure 4. Zhu Cheng (1926–1990).
Peach Blossom and Birds. Undated.
Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper.
Shanghai Museum.

on Donkeyback, Wang Xizhi Trading His Calligraphy for a Goose, Mi Fu Bowing to a Rock, Jiang Baishi Playing Pan-Pipes to the Tune of a Poem, and Ni Zan Washing the Paulownia Trees. He also illustrated stories about popularly known historical figures and events, including *Su Wu Herding Sheep*, *Lady Wang Zhaojun Passing the Frontier*, *Bo Le Evaluating Horseflesh*, *Hua Mulan Joining the Army*, and *The Three Knights Errant* (cat. 11). The myths, legends, and Buddhist and Daoist figures that he painted often had congratulatory, auspicious, or apotropaic connotations, and were suited to the beliefs and aspirations of the common people. They include deities of good fortune, wealth and longevity; the Daoist goddess Magu Granting Longevity; the Eight Immortals; The Immortals Granting Longevity; Nü Wa Patching the Heavens; Liu Hai Playing with the Toad; Zhongkui the Demon Queller; the Buddha Amitayus; the Bodhisattva Guanyin; and Bodhidharma. These themes appealed to all classes of metropolitan society—to people of elite culture and to those of more popular taste. Ren Yi, with his superlative talent for artistic conceptualization, carefully designed every composition, making each scene simple and vivid. The character of each figure is clear and emphatic, and the compositions are appealing and unconventional. *The Five Successful Sons* (cat. 10), painted in 1877, is based on the story of Dou Yujun, of the Five Dynasties state of Later Zhou (951–960), whose five sons all passed the imperial civil-service examinations. In ancient times passing the imperial examination was called “bending the cassia branch,” which is why the Chinese title of this painting may be literally translated as “Five Red Cassias in Fragrant Bloom.” In the painting, Dou Yujun sits at a stone table. His oldest son, beside the table, holds an open book. His second son teaches his little brother calligraphy, while the third eldest holds his youngest brother up beside his father. Ren Yi has taken a serious theme—the road to success is through study—and rendered it with great artistic charm, thereby imbuing it with the mood of a happy family, natural and warm.

Ren Yi based his earliest figure-painting technique on that of Fei Danxu, a nineteenth-century master known for

slender and elegant female figures executed with fine, soft brushwork. These qualities appear in Ren Yi’s work done in his twenties. From about the age of twenty-four, when Ren Yi began to study painting with Ren Xun, exaggerated forms and sharp, straight brush strokes gradually dominated his style. The sharp lines of the draperies in *Five Successful Sons* continue the style of Ren Xun, but curve much more freely and fluidly. After migrating to Shanghai, Ren Yi had the opportunity to expand his technical repertoire by viewing paintings by ancient masters. The loose and simple style of Hua Yan and the bold and severe manner of Zhu Da particularly attracted him. From the exercise of copying their work, he realized that “making a painting should be similar to composing one’s spirit, and no different from writing calligraphy.”¹⁶ In his late thirties his painting style gradually moved beyond the complicated compositions and firm, angular outlines of his early work and toward a style characterized by simple compositions and free and fluid brushwork. By about 1881 he had created his own typical style, which combined broad, loose, expressionistic brushwork (*xieyi*) with fine-line detail (*gongbi*) in a free but instinctively controlled manner. Then began a decade of experimentation. His hanging scroll depicting the *Three Knights Errant* (cat. 11) is a good example of his mature style. The composition is particularly ingenious. Curly Beard, on donkeyback, turns back to look at the hero Li Jing and his paramour Hongfu, who are partly concealed behind the branches of a tree. The partially hidden figures lend the painting an atmosphere of mystery and secrecy appropriate to their story.

Ren Yi was also extremely accomplished as a flower painter. His early flower-and-bird paintings, constructed of ink outlines and rich colors, follow the style of Ren Xun but also incorporate techniques from Chen Hongshou and the Song masters. When Ren Yi first arrived in Shanghai, the flower-and-bird paintings of Zhang Xiong, Wang Li, Zhu Cheng, and Zhou Xian, who had come to Shanghai earlier, were already famous in the city. After Ren Yi got to know the artists, he absorbed the strengths of their



Figure 5. Hu Yuan (1823–1886). Viewing the Waterfall. 1861. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper. Shanghai Museum.

techniques, including Zhang Xiong's orderly and well-balanced compositions, Zhou Xian's richness and elegance, and Wang Li's powerful brushwork, as well as the appealing and clear color of all three. He adopted all of these, selecting and synthesizing, and thereby amending the overly decorative compositions and somewhat stiff lines of his earliest flower-and-bird paintings. Other important artistic influences were the free, elegant brushwork of the eighteenth-century Yangzhou painter Hua Yan and the bold *xieyi* manner of the seventeenth-century individualist Zhu Da, combined with his own study of drawing techniques and painting from life. By the 1880s Ren had established a unique style of flower-and-bird painting, far surpassing his contemporaries, and created a new prototype (see cat. 9) that suited the tenor of his times.

Ren Yi's mature style of flower-and-bird painting reveals the following characteristics: diverse and lively subject matter, including flowers, birds, animals, insects, vegetables, and fruits; novel, ingenious, and varied compositions; precise and accurate but also animated forms; richly varied and masterfully executed painting techniques, including fine outlines, dots, washes, splashed ink, and *mogu* ("boneless") ink or color; applied without outlines), employed singly or in harmonious combination; bright, clean colors in mingled transparent and opaque applications. Ren Yi's rich and expressive artistic language evokes bird calls and floral scents; it enabled him to paint into being a vital and poetic world, pervaded by sensory experience.

In 1925 Chen Xiaodie (Dingshan), author of *Jindai liushi mingjia huazhuan* ("Biographies of Sixty Modern Painters"), pointed out that a new school of painting appeared in the Shanghai area during the Tongzhi and Guangxu reigns (1862–1908), which was established by Zhang Xiong, reached maturity with Ren Yi, and included artists such as Zhu Xiong, Wang Li, Zhu Cheng (see fig. 4), Ren Xiong, Ren Xun, and Hu Yuan (see fig. 5). In particular, Chen recognized the transforming roles of Ren Xiong and Ren Yi in this school of painting, which he called the "Tongguang" school (abbreviating the names of the Tongzhi and Guangxu reign periods). Chen recognized,

too, that these artists had created a new style of painting, quite different from the styles of their mid-Qing predecessors. In Chen's literary comparison, the painters of the Tongguang generation might be compared with the poets of the late Tang dynasty, who differed utterly from those of mid-Tang. These artists of the Tongguang school, later called the Shanghai school, were unique and not to be confused with their mid-Qing predecessors.

Like Yangzhou school painters of the eighteenth century, Shanghai painters moved to extricate painting from the prescriptive canons of the literati "amateurs"¹⁷ and shift it toward the tastes of merchants and common people. They deemphasized the symbolism and didacticism that were so conspicuous in traditional literati painting, brought subject matter closer to nature and the real world, and worked for visual immediacy and popular appeal. They also harmoniously combined techniques and conventions that were traditionally employed separately: outline with "boneless" (*mogu*) painting and, most notably, the fine-line, detailed manner (*gongbi*) with the impressionistic free-brush manner (*xieyi*). Ren Yi, in addition, employed Western-style drawing to strengthen the accuracy and vitality of his images. In their use of color, Shanghai painters departed from the coolness of literati painting, the opacity of court painting, and the delicacy of the Yun Shouping school, instead employing clear, bright tones that evoked immediate aesthetic pleasure. The Tongguang school of painting, which reached its maturity with Ren Yi, represented an urbanized artistic trend that indeed occupies a leading position in the history of Chinese art.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF LITERATI PAINTING

One of the better-educated artists of the Shanghai school was Xugu (1823–1896). His personal name was Zhu Huairan, and he was a native of Shexian in Anhui Province.¹⁸ When young, he joined the Qing army as a low-ranking officer. In about 1853, when the Taiping army attacked Zhenjiang and the Yangzhou area, he left the army to become a Buddhist monk,¹⁹ taking the monastic

name Xugu, which may be translated "Empty Ravine." He then traveled around the Yangzhou, Suzhou, Shanghai, and Hangzhou areas, coming to know many poets and painters. He painted and practiced calligraphy primarily for his own enjoyment, but sometimes he sold paintings to support himself.

There are many common interpretations of Xugu's reasons for taking the tonsure. After becoming a monk, he took the additional name Juanhe ("Tired Crane"), perhaps suggesting exhaustion from the warfare and turmoil of the secular world and a hope for spiritual freedom as a Buddhist monk. He still loved life, however, and retained an idealistic desire for a peaceful world. Thus, even after becoming a monk, he did not follow orthodox Buddhist practices, such as vegetarianism and ritual worship, but instead devoted himself to painting as a means of self-cultivation, seeking the value of life in art. Xugu's outlook on life, to which we can attribute the complexity of his painting, was based on two broad principles: to avoid politics, and to pursue artistic achievement. A poem reveals his contradictory state of mind: "With color and sensuality, the [blossoms] are even more alive; a single plum branch can fill the world with spring. From outside the worldly realm, I look at secular life; [but I wonder] how can there be no humans amid the quiet mountain streams?"²⁰

Xugu's approach to becoming a monk and escaping the secular world greatly resembles that of many recluses and frustrated literati of ancient times. Because he was born in Shexian (Anhui Province), and lived in Yangzhou (Jiangsu Province), his painting very naturally followed the manner of the early Qing Shexian painters Hongren and Cheng Sui, as well as that of the mid-Qing Yangzhou eccentrics. Peace and solitude are strongly evoked in his landscapes, such as *An Endless Day in the Tranquil Mountains* (cat. 14). The brushwork is dry but strong, and conveys well the mood of the poetic phrase "an endless day, like a year; mountains as tranquil as the cosmos," which is inscribed on the painting. The mood and the brushwork here recall Hongren and Cheng Sui.

Following the conventions of literati painting, Xugu's paintings often feature

plum, orchid, bamboo, chrysanthemum, narcissus, and lotus blossoms. Poems or inscriptions accompany these subjects, such as: "Autumn colors faintly tint the emptiness, its final fragrance lingering" (chrysanthemum); "Its nature is pure and modest, its character strong and direct" (bamboo); "Touched by its far-reaching fragrance, purity appears naturally" (lotus); and "They can bring spring to the world" (plum blossoms). These phrases express the lofty personal character aspired to by literati and also correspond to the pale, untrammelled purity of Xugu's brushwork.

Thus, Xugu was not a monk in complete reclusion from the secular world. He loved painting and calligraphy, and he painted not only for his own pleasure but to make a living. He came to know many scholars, painters, and calligraphers, and his friends included Hu Yuan, Zhang Xiong, Ren Yi, Gao Yong, Zhu Cheng, Qian Hui'an, and Cheng Zhang. He also had contact with Zhu Jingtang, the owner of the Jiuhuatang fan shop, and the official Shen Lingyuan, who was the subject of his painting *Fisherman at Mount Feng*. His wide acquaintanceship and passionate love of nature, as well as his closeness to everyday life and the aspirations of the common people, gave rise to the secular or worldly aspects of his art. Xugu's works contain an abundance of images from everyday life, especially vegetables and fruits (such as bamboo shoots, string beans, gourds, cabbage, lichees, loquats, grapes, lotus seeds) and various small creatures (including squirrels, fish, cats, mynah birds, and paradise flycatchers). These images are simple, appealing, and full of vitality.

Like other Shanghai school painters, Xugu also painted many subjects with auspicious symbolism. The most frequent are goldfish and wisteria (= attainment of high office); crane and pine (= longevity), peaches of immortality (= longevity), peonies (= wealth), *lingzhi* fungus (= longevity), and Buddha's hand citron (= wisdom and longevity), all of which reflect a popularizing tendency directed to the concerns and tastes of merchants and common people. Xugu, however, lent these themes the qualities of literati painting. For example, his goldfish swimming placidly in clear, shallow water have

none of the ostentatiousness often associated with this popular subject matter. The simple and slightly awkward goldfish, outlined with angular strokes, reflect Xugu's strong, direct personality. Most of his cranes are portrayed standing on one leg, with their heads tucked, reticent rather than flamboyant. For all Xugu's sympathy with common aspirations, his art was not showy; on the contrary, he maintained his aesthetic purity and simplicity.

Xugu's brushwork carried on the cool, pure, fresh quality of the literati tradition. He especially emulated the styles of Cheng Sui, Hongren, Hua Yan, and Jin Nong, synthesizing them into his own artistic language. For his flower-and-bird paintings he cleverly adapted the dry, vigorous brushwork that Cheng Sui and Hongren used in their landscape paintings. Standard techniques, such as trembling brush (*zhanbi*), segmented brushwork (*duanbi*), and reversed brush (*nifeng*), were transformed in his hands, producing new kinds of rhythms. He also adopted Hua Yan's loose, free brush and Jin Nong's old-style naïveté, thus differentiating his work completely from the orthodox flower-and-bird painting of the Qing period as characterized by the school of Yun Shouping.

The forms of Xugu's images reveal an avant-garde consciousness. He distorted some images in order to create geometric forms and certain other formalistic elements. In one leaf of his *Album of Various Subjects*, painted in 1895, "Fresh Bamboo Shoots and Plump Puffers" (cat. 16-a), the oval shapes of the fish are juxtaposed with the elongated cones of the vegetables. Here, descriptive accuracy is subordinated to the contrast between shapes, rounded and angular, and between ink textures, dry and wet. The emotional effect is a counterpoint of calm and excitement. This strongly formalistic quality is also seen in "Swimming Fish Under Willow Leaves" and "Goldfish Playing in the Stream" (cats. 16-b, 16-d).

Xugu's career, education, personality, and self-cultivation imbued his art with the cool, restrained quality of literati painting but never obliterated his concern with the realities of daily life and with the natural world. As a result, his work always contains multiple layers of

meaning and avoids the emotional distance of traditional literati painting. At the same time, he strengthened the formal beauty and visual immediacy of his work by greater use of abstraction and emphasis on the rhythm and harmony of the lines. These significant innovations simultaneously exemplified and advanced the modern transformation of painting from an instrument of uplift (as most earlier painting was) to an art of purely sensual enjoyment. In this respect Xugu was a pioneer in moving Chinese painting from the classical literati tradition toward modernity.

THE RISE OF THE EPIGRAPHIC SCHOOL OF PAINTING

Beginning in the late eighteenth century a "Stele school" of calligraphy came into being, which took as its models the calligraphy styles on carved steles of the Six Dynasties period (317–589). Such steles were being unearthed in significant numbers at about that time, leading to a new awareness and appreciation of their calligraphy. Similarly, seal carvers came to admire the antique calligraphy found on carved seals of the Qin and Han periods. By the first half of the nineteenth century three schools of seal carving had come into existence: the "[An]Hui school," the "Zhe[jiang] school," and the "Wan school" (Deng Shiru and his followers). These all reflect a major transformation in aesthetic tastes of the period, away from refinement, skill, and elegance and toward simplicity and vigor.

Painting and calligraphy are closely related in their uses of brush and ink. The innovations in calligraphy and seal-carving circles strongly influenced painters. Artists attempting to reinvigorate traditional painting, especially those who simultaneously excelled in calligraphy and seal carving, worked to adapt the brush techniques and carving skills of those arts for painting, in order to strengthen the epigraphic quality of painting for expressive purposes. Several generations of effort resulted in a new style, which came to be known as the "Epigraphic school of painting." Instrumental in establishing this school was Zhao Zhiqian (1829–1884). A native of Guiji in Zhejiang, he spent most of his working life in Zhejiang, Fujian, and

Jiangxi provinces and in Beijing. His activity in Shanghai and his relationships with Shanghai painters are not well documented, but according to the early twentieth-century *Haishang molin*, he "sometimes traveled to Shanghai, and his calligraphy was very popular. Everyone coveted it."²⁰ Because his painting strongly influenced the later Shanghai master Wu Changshi, art historians usually include Zhao Zhiqian in the Shanghai school.

Zhao Zhiqian was a profoundly accomplished calligrapher and seal carver. His early calligraphy followed the standard-script style of Yan Zhenqing of the Tang dynasty. Later, he turned to the stele styles of the Six Dynasties period and to Deng Shiru's version of clerical script, merging and transforming these two models into his own semicursive script style.

In seal carving, he began by following the Zhe school and was particularly good at deep-stroke carving, a style that was simple and vigorous. Later he followed the Wan school of Deng Shiru, and also adapted calligraphic scripts found on Han seals and on Qin weights, steles, tiles, and coins, creating out of these influences a brilliant, powerful, and individual style that expressed his unique artistic sensibility. Compositionally, he explored the interplay of void and substance, sparseness and denseness. His carving technique combined boldness and directness with elegance and fluidity and initiated a new seal-carving trend.

Adapting his skills at calligraphy and seal carving for use in painting, Zhao Zhiqian created a new manner of expressionistic, free-brush (*xieyi*) flower-and-bird painting. He based his paintings on traditional ink painting in the *xieyi* manner, following Chen Chun and Xu Wei of the Ming period, Zhu Da and Shitao of the early Qing period, and Li Fangying and Zhang Cining of the mid-Qing. Applying to this foundation his adaptations of the principles of calligraphy and seal carving, he achieved innovative compositions, brushwork, and mood. The compositions of Zhao Zhiqian's flower paintings are full, rich, and arresting. Even in a depiction of a single branch, the painting surface is extremely dynamic, completely different from both the cool

restraint of most Ming-Qing literati painting and the aristocratic extravagance of court flower-and-bird painting. In his painting, as in his calligraphy and seal carving, he arranged space and compositional elements so as to create strong contrasts between void and substance, sparseness and denseness. The structures and compositions of his paintings embody Deng Shiru's theory: "The sparse places in calligraphy and painting should be wide enough for a horse to run through, and the dense places should be tight enough to keep out the wind. You should treat white space as though it were painted."

Adapting specific antique styles of calligraphy and seal carving to the purposes of painting was Zhao Zhiqian's most important contribution. He emphasized that painting is founded on calligraphic skills: "The principle of painting originates from calligraphy. If you are not good at calligraphy, but pursue painting, it is just like feeding a baby rice before he is weaned. . . . If the painter cannot do calligraphy, his work will be vulgar."²¹ The common origin of painting and calligraphy was an ancient truism in China, but Zhao Zhiqian's statements quoted here are not mere clichés. The calligraphy that he esteemed was specifically the new "stele style" of his own era. He stated, "Because I began studying seal script, I can write clerical script. Because I know how to write clerical script, I can write standard script."²² Zhao's touchstone was the bold simplicity of clerical script. Introducing this trait into painting created a naïve, almost awkward quality, of which he wrote: "The painter's awkwardness is different from wildness. So-called awkwardness here is the supreme rhythm of brushwork. In the Ming dynasty Chen Chun was awkward; Zhang Lu was wild. In the early Qing dynasty Shitao and others were wild. In the wildness of Fang Yizhi and Zhu Da you can see awkwardness, so their brushwork is bold. In the awkwardness of Li Shan you can see wildness, so his brushwork is monumental."²³ Discussing seal carving, Zhao Zhiqian declared that "the marvelous thing about Han bronze seals is not their rustic quality, but their straightforward strength." From these comments we can see that Zhao Zhiqian applied essentially the

same aesthetic to calligraphy, painting, and seal carving. He strongly favored awkwardness, simplicity, and boldness, and consciously "brought the qualities of seal script and clerical script calligraphy into his painting."²⁶ His brushwork was vigorous and solid, similar to the clerical script of the Han dynasty or stele style of the Six Dynasties, with a very rhythmic quality. In his 1859 album *Flowers* (cat. 6), Zhao Zhiqian clearly took pains to apply his brush strokes awkwardly but not wildly. His ink is very dark but not murky, and his brushwork possesses Chen Chun's ease, Shitao's boldness, and Li Shan's freedom, as well as an unprecedented plain, somewhat awkward, epigraphic quality. These traits, fused, created his unique style.

The new emphasis on color among Shanghai and Zhejiang artists of the late Qing period permeated Zhao Zhiqian's painting. In contrast to the quiet elegance of Yun Shouping, these later artists used color to completely different purpose and effect. Zhao followed Zhang Xiong in using Western red for flowers. In some pictures he used red, green, and blue together, to create a bright, vividly chromatic effect. He also combined heavy color and gradations of black ink, all applied with powerful brush strokes, to avoid superficial charm or vulgarity.

Highly as Zhao Zhiqian valued the formal beauty of calligraphic and epigraphic brushwork, he did not slight the descriptive function of painting. He often made paintings from life, such as his 1861 handscroll *Native Products of Ou* (present-day Wenzhou, Zhejiang), in which he painted characteristic flowers and plants of the locale very realistically. *The Book Collecting Cliff* (cat. 7)—one of his few landscape paintings—depicts a mountain peak at Fangshan in Hebei Province. The striated rock surfaces of the caves in this mountain suggested cabinets piled with books, hence the name. The appearance of monumental altitude, the complex composition, and the naturalistic detailing of the cave interiors lend the painting a highly realistic aspect. Unconventional texture strokes describe the surface of the mountain, including curved lines to depict the rounded boulders, creating a strongly textural feeling.

Zhao Zhiqian's flower painting too

reflects consciousness of popular artistic taste. He often painted peonies, wisteria, lotus, and peaches (which symbolize, respectively, wealth and beauty; good fortune; harmony, fecundity, and purity; and longevity), enhancing their optimistic connotations with simple but auspicious inscriptions (see cat. 6). His simultaneous appeal to elite and popular tastes echoed the general trend among other Shanghai painters.

During the second half of the nineteenth century other painters took up Zhao Zhiqian's emphasis on calligraphic and epigraphic elements in painting. His contemporaries Zhou Xian and Pu Hua, whose bold, forceful brushwork was influenced by the stele style of calligraphy, also worked to revitalize painting by the introduction of calligraphic and epigraphic styles and techniques. With his strength in seal carving and calligraphy, however, Zhao Zhiqian was better able to synthesize the common artistic language of the three arts of calligraphy, seal carving, and painting in order to create a bold, simple, powerful painting style.

Zhao Zhiqian's innovative ideas and acute artistic sensibility may have influenced his successors even more than his painting did. Building on Zhao's experiments in combining epigraphic, calligraphic, and painterly skills, Wu Changshi (1844–1927) and his followers created a brilliant new free-brush (*xieyi*) flower-and-bird style.

Translated and adapted by Kuiyi Shen
and Julia F. Andrews

NOTES

1. Wang Xieyun, *Songnan mengyinqiu* (1889). Reprinted in *Lidan xiaoshuo bin xuan*, Qing 3 ("Selected Ancient Novels and Essays, Qing Dynasty, pt. 3") (Shanghai, 1983).
2. Zhang Mingke, *Hansongge tanyu suolu* (1908). Reprint (Shanghai, 1988), p. 150.
3. Yang Yi, *Haishang molin*, 1918. Reprint (Shanghai, 1989), preface.
4. See Wan Qingli, "Bing fei shuairuo de bainian" ("It was not the century of decline"), *Xiongshi meishu*, vol. 259.
5. His sobriquet (*hao*) was Yuanhu waishi.
6. *Tongyan fuzhi*.
7. Zhang Xiong's by-name (*zi*) was Jifu and his sobriquet (*hao*) was Mengquan.
8. He was also called Qiuyan.
9. His sobriquet was Xiangpu.
10. Translator's note: For a discussion in English of various compositions related to *Count Ladies*, see the entry on a handscroll painting attributed to the Tang artist Zhou Fang, *Palace Ladies Tuning the Lute*, in *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting: The Collections of the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, and The Cleveland Museum of Art* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1980), pl. 1, pp.8-10.
11. Translator's note: Reproductions of this painting can be found in *Masterworks of Shanghai School Painters from the Shanghai Museum Collection* (Hong Kong: Tai Yip Co., 1991), no. 14, and in Claudia Brown and Ju-hsi Chou, *Transcending Turmoil: Painting at the Close of China's Empire* (Phoenix, Ariz.: Phoenix Art Museum, 1992), no. 61.
12. His sobriquet was Shunqing.
13. His given name was Run, his by-names (*zi*) were Ciyuan and Bonian, and his sobriquets (*hao*) included Xiaolou and Shanyin daoren.
14. Wang Tao, in *Yingruan zazhi* (1875).
15. Zhang Mingke, *Hansongge tanyu suole*, is the source for this and the following quotation.
16. Yang Yi, *Haishang molin*, vol. 3, p. 18.
17. The Chinese term for this attitude, *zile* (literally, "self-enjoyment"), refers to the practice of lofty cultural pursuits as a pastime; the term often carries the negative connotation of elitism.
18. His by-name (*zi*) was Xubai and his sobriquet (*hao*) was Ziyang shanmin.
19. Yang Yi, *Haishang molin*, vol. 4, p. 2.
20. Inscription on a four-panel set of paintings, *The Four Gentlemen*, in the collection of the *Xitong yinshe* in Hangzhou.
21. Yang Yi, *Haishang molin*, vol. 3, p. 10.
22. Zhao Zhiqian, *Zhang'an zashuo* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Art Publishing House, 1989).
23. Zhao Zhiqian, *Yumeng xingshu*, as quoted in Qian Juntao, "Zhao Zhiqian de yishu chengjin," in *Zhao Zhiqian*.
24. Zhao Zhiqian, *Zhang'an zashuo*.
25. Yang Yi, *Haishang molin*, vol. 3, p. 10.

2. Ren Xiong (1823-1857)

The Ten Miracids

Undated

Album of ten leaves, ink and color on gold

paper; each leaf 26.3 x 20.5 cm

Palace Museum, Beijing





b



c



d



e



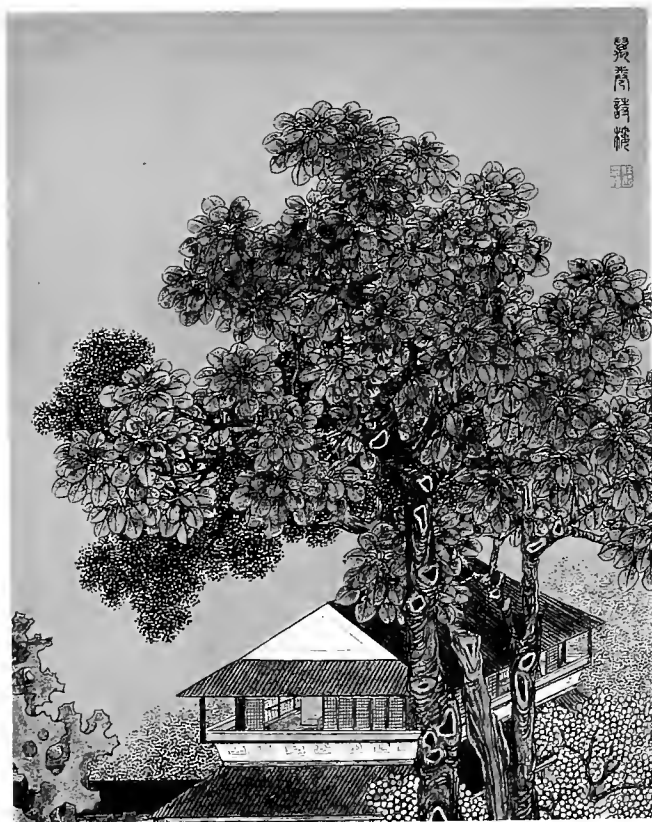
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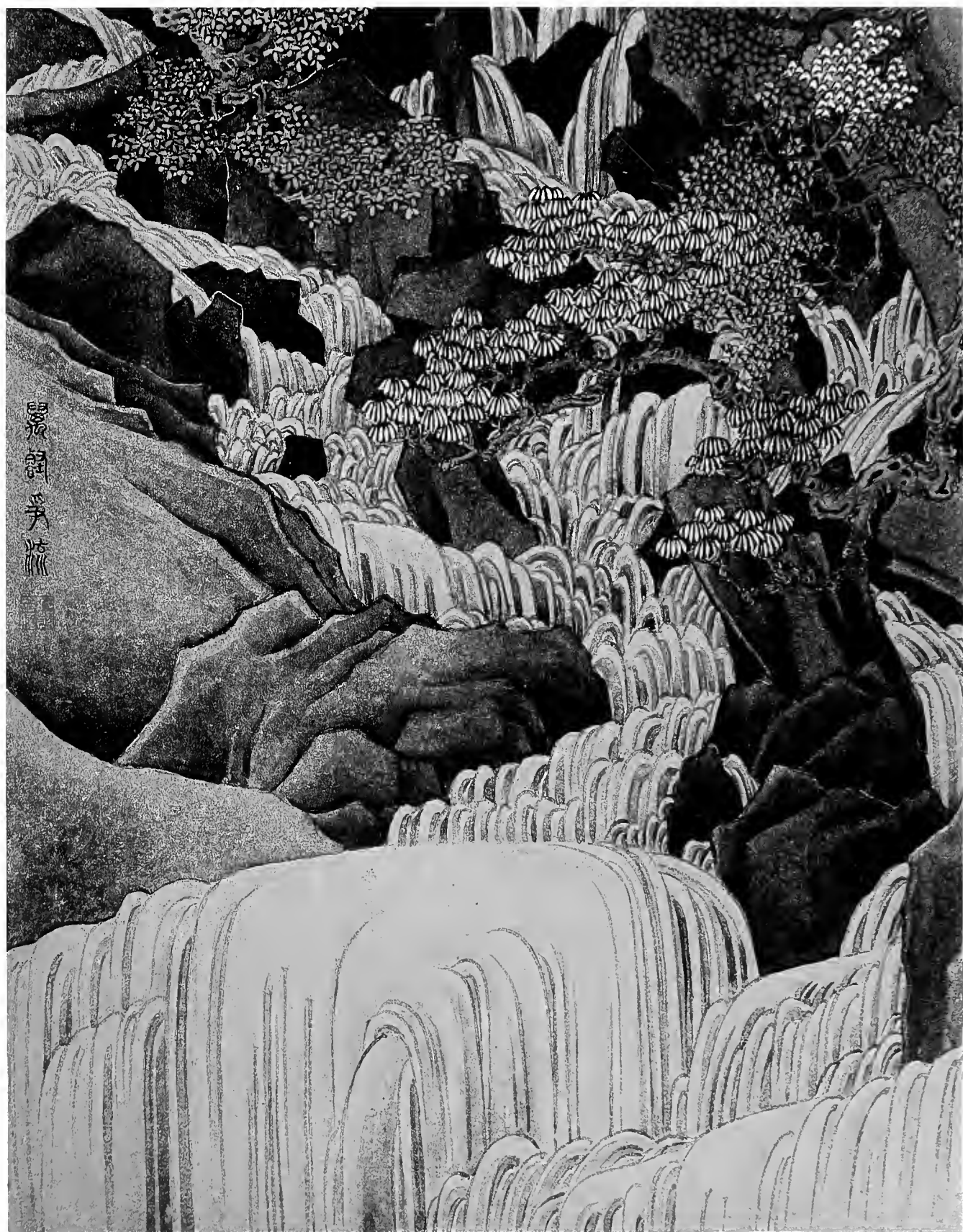
g



h



i



3. Ren Xiong (1823–1857)

Album After the Poems of Yao Xie

1850–1851

Twenty-four leaves from an album
of 120 leaves, ink and color on silk;
each leaf 27.5 x 32.5 cm
Palace Museum, Beijing



3-2.a



3-2.b



3-2.c



3-2.d



3-2.e



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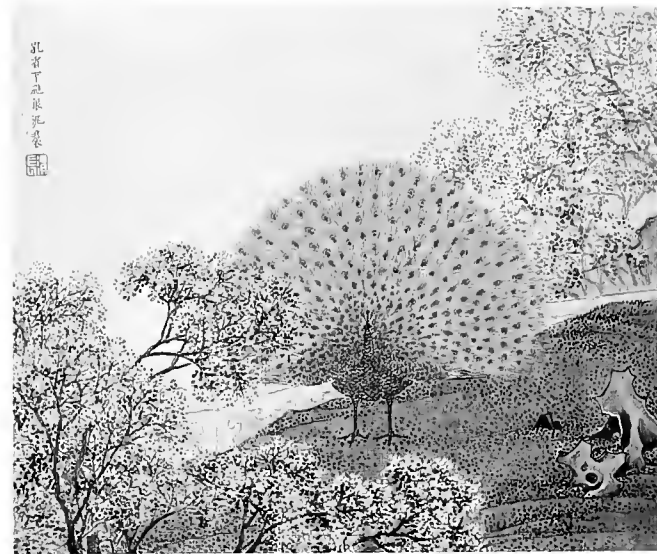
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3-2.l



3-4.a



3-4.b



3-4.c



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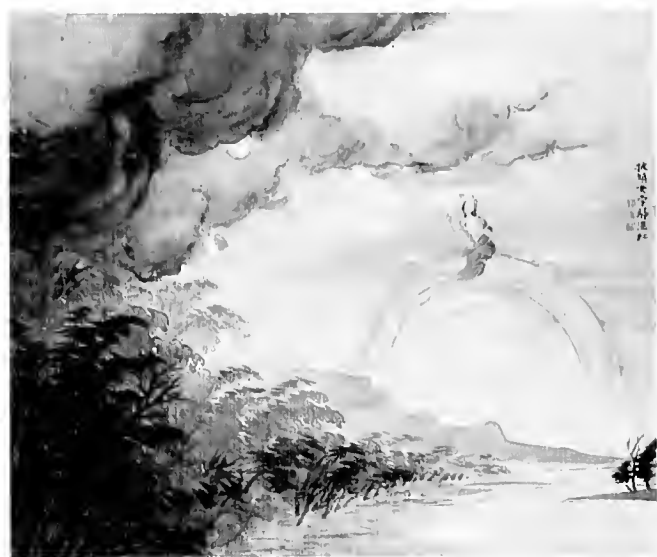
3-4.e



3-4.f



3-4.g



3-4.h



3-4.i



3-4.j



3-4.k



3-4.l

4. Ren Xiong (1823–1857)

*Drinking Cards with Illustrations of the
48 Immortals*

1851

Woodblock-printed book; 29.8 x 13.2 cm

Private collection



5. Ren Xun (1835–1893)
The Romance of the Western Chamber
Undated
Four leaves from an album of
twelve leaves, ink and color on paper;
each leaf 34 x 35.5 cm
Palace Museum, Beijing



a



b



c



d



a



b



c



d



e



f

7. Zhao Zhiqian (1829–1884)

The Book Collecting Cliff

Undated

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

69.5 x 39 cm

Shanghai Museum



8. **Ren Yi** (Ren Bonian; 1840–1895) and

Hu Yuan (Hu Gongshou; 1823–1886)

Portrait of Gao Yong

1877

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

139 x 48.5 cm

Shanghai Museum



9. Ren Yi (Ren Bonian; 1840-1895)

Album of Figures, Flowers, and Birds

1881-1882

Eight leaves from an album of
twelve leaves, ink and color on paper;
each leaf 31.5 x 36 cm

Palace Museum, Beijing



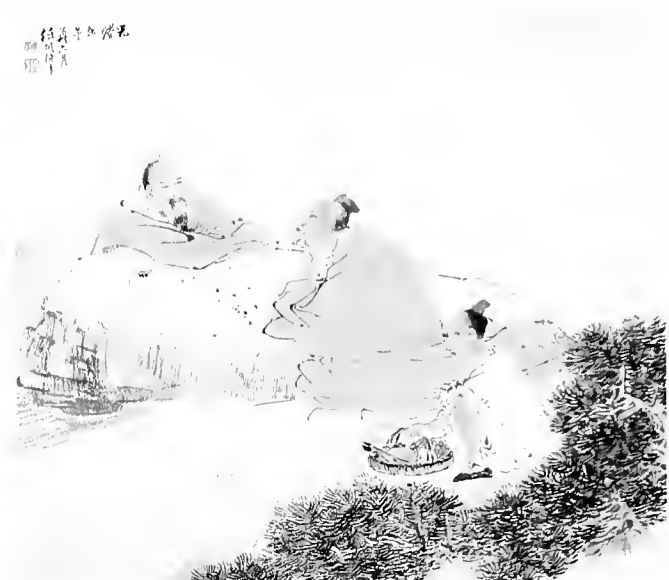
a



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g



h

10. **Ren Yi** (Ren Bonian; 1840–1895)

Five Successful Sons

1877

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

181.5 x 95.1 cm

Palace Museum, Beijing



11. **Ren Yi** (Ren Bonian; 1840–1895)

Three Knights Errant

1882

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

182.1 x 48.2 cm

Palace Museum, Beijing



12. Ren Yi (Ren Bonian; 1840-1895)
The Shabby Official (Portrait of
Wu Changshi)
1888
Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;
164.2 x 74.6 cm
Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Hangzhou



Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Hangzhou



14. Xugu (1823–1896)

An Endless Day in the Tranquil Mountains

Undated

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

147 x 10 cm

Shanghai Museum



15. Xugu (1823–1896)

Three Friends

1891

Handscroll, ink and color on paper;

29 x 152 cm

Private collection





16. Xu Gu (1823-1896)

Album of Various Subjects

1895

Six leaves of an album of ten leaves, ink
and color on paper; each leaf 34.7 x 40.6 cm

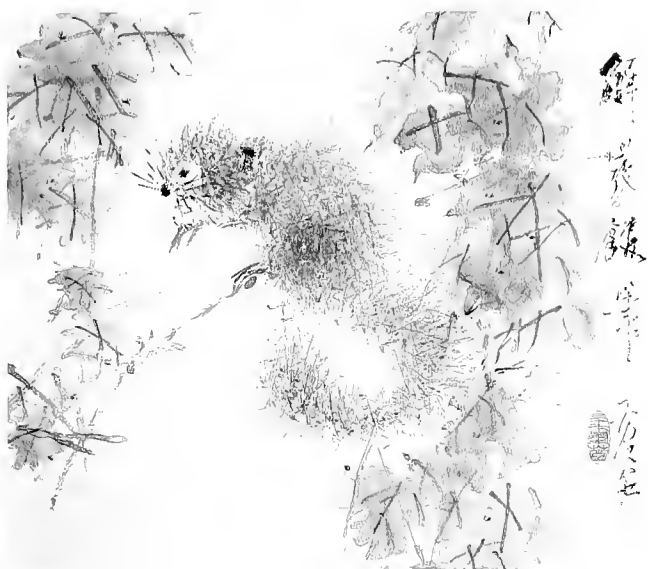
Shanghai Museum



a



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f

The Lingnan School and Its Followers: Radical Innovation in Southern China

Christina Chu, Hong Kong Museum of Art

The encounter between China and the West that began in the late eighteenth century erupted during the nineteenth in violent confrontations, and it engendered turmoil in modern China. The humiliations inflicted upon the ancient "Central Kingdom" inspired a close and painful reappraisal of traditional ethics, customs, literature, history, philosophy, religion, and social and political institutions. As the West seemed magnificently immune to the very vicissitudes it had evoked in China, the Chinese looked to the West for remedies. A series of "self-strengthening movements"—drives for Westernization and modernization—was launched, aimed at making China similar and equal to the West. Leading reformers included Kang Youwei (1858–1927)¹ and his student Liang Qichao (1873–1929),² who advocated constitutional monarchy, and the increasingly radical Chen Duxiu (1879–1942), who moved from socialism to Communism. All advocated Western science and political institutions, soon codified in the slogan "science and democracy," as remedies for China's ills.

For its inability to serve the goals of reform and reconstruction, the long and venerated tradition of Chinese painting was sadly discredited. Reformers were particularly derisive of the practice of transmitting traditional styles through repetitive copying of earlier orthodox masters. Both the style and the content of traditional Chinese art were closely scrutinized and challenged, impugned as props and expressions of a corrupt regime and a decayed society. A new China required a new art, one in which science was translated as naturalism and realism and democracy was transposed into liberalism, pragmatism, and utilitarianism.

Much influenced by the welter of new and competing doctrines and programs for reform, artists took onto themselves a new sense of mission and initiated a revolution in art. Searching for new inspirations and new dynamics to revitalize Chinese painting, they began a stream of artistic pilgrimages to the West. Japan, far easier of access and, following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, an exemplar of rapid and successful modernization, became an equally desirable destination for Chinese painters looking to study abroad.³

Gao Jianfu (1879–1951) sailed to Japan to study art in 1906.⁴ Xu Beihong (1895–1953) went to Paris in 1919 to acquire the techniques of Western realism in the French Academic style. Lin Fengmian (1900–1991) arrived in Paris in 1920 and took up the styles of the Post-Impressionists. They became the most prominent reformers of Chinese art in the twentieth century. Of the three, Gao Jianfu—who went to Japan more than a decade before cultural and political nationalism coalesced in the nationwide "May Fourth movement" in 1919—must be credited as the earliest visionary of artistic reform, with the most politically radical career intertwining with his artistic endeavors. Gao Jianfu, his brother Gao Qifeng (1889–1933), and Chen Shuren (1884–1948) founded the Lingnan school of painting, which still today has the largest following of any traditional school of painting.

HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

From the fifteenth century the centers of culture in China have been Beijing and its environs along the Yellow River basin in the north and Shanghai and its environs along the Yangzi River basin in central China. Gao Jianfu came from Guangdong, the southernmost province in China. The formidable mountain ranges (*ling*) that lay between Guangdong and the provinces to its north gave Guangdong its ancient name of Lingnan ("South of the Ranges").⁵ Until recently these mountains also isolated Guangdong from the mainstream of cultural and artistic development. The influence of Gao Jianfu's theories of artistic reform was such that, for the first time in Chinese history, ideas flowed northward from the far south.

Although Guangdong lagged behind northern China in cultural development, Guangzhou, the largest city in Guangdong, was the earliest maritime trading port in China.⁶ In 1757 the Qianlong emperor closed all the ports of Fujian, Zhejiang, and Jiangsu provinces, leaving Guangzhou as the exclusive maritime trade outlet. About that time Europe was discovering its urgent need of new markets to absorb the overabundance of manufactures created by the Industrial

Revolution. From 1757 until the opening of the treaty ports beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, Guangzhou enjoyed its status as the sole trading port in China.

From the late nineteenth century, when recognition of its own weakness was thrust upon China, Guangdong Province produced some of China's most illustrious reformers. Kang Youwei and his student Liang Qichao, proponents of a constitutional monarchy, were ardent supporters of westernization. The more radical Sun Yat-sen (1866-1921) advocated and briefly succeeded in replacing the Manchu monarchy with a democratic republic. Gao Jianfu, a follower of Sun, not only participated in the political and military struggle but also led a revolution in art.

DEVELOPMENT OF PAINTING IN GUANGDONG

Until the Ming dynasty, we have little or no painting of distinction by painters from Guangdong.⁷ Among the earliest to survive are a small number of flower-and-bird paintings in the style of the court academy by Lin Liang (1465-1505), a court painter from Guangdong.⁸

Guangdong painting did not acquire a mature artistic identity until the Qianlong period (1736-1795), when material affluence stemming from maritime trade gave rise to a prosperous entrepreneurial class and an associated literati culture. Painters, collectors, connoisseurs, and patrons of that period nurtured a cultural milieu that aspired to rival the cultural centers farther north. In the works of Li Jian (1747-1799) we see the beginning of a tradition of literati landscape painting, somewhat distinct from the mainstream development in the north.⁹

Li Jian's contribution to the development of Guangdong painting lay in his incorporation of new subjects into his paintings. He also replaced inscriptions in classical Chinese with Cantonese vernacular poems on his paintings. Li Jian is perhaps the earliest painter to paint kapok, a native plant of Guangdong that became a unique emblem in Guangdong painting. Himself of humble background, chronically ill, and poor, Li Jian imbued his paintings with general compassion and particular sympathy for the underprivileged, which lent his art a certain

originality and freshness. These personal idiosyncrasies, which might be considered marks of a provincialism engendered by prolonged geographical isolation, are at the same time among the defining characteristics of a distinctive Guangdong tradition. Whether the common characteristics of Guangdong culture qualify simply as regionalism (a possible impediment to artistic greatness) or as artistic independence (a necessary condition of aesthetic distinction) is not easily resolved.

THE KESHAN SCHOOL: JU CHAO AND JU LIAN

Artists such as Li Jian and Xie Lansheng (1760-1831) dominated the development of landscape painting in Guangdong, but the flower-and-bird painters Ju Chao (ca. 1824-1889) and Ju Lian (1828-1904) initiated another important chapter in that province's painting history.

Ju Chao and Ju Lian, first cousins from a family of scholars and officials, were both natives of Keshan village, Panyu district, Guangdong Province.¹⁰ In his youth Ju Lian studied painting with Ju Chao. When Ju Chao took up a minor official appointment as personal adviser to Zhang Jingxiu (1823-1864)¹¹ in Guangxi Province, he took his young cousin with him. In Guangxi they made the acquaintance of two flower-and-bird painters from Jiangsu Province, Song Guangbao (act. mid-nineteenth c.)¹² and Meng Jinyi (act. mid-nineteenth c.).¹³ Their exposure to these painters improved their expressionistic, free-brush (*rieyi*) renditions of flower-and-bird subjects in the "boneless" (*mogu*, i.e., without outline) style of Chen Chun (1483-1544) and Yun Shouping (1633-1690).

In 1858, when Zhang Jingxiu finished his tour of duty in Guangxi, he returned to Boxiacun, his native village in Dongguan prefecture, Guangdong, and there built a villa that he named Keyuan.¹⁴ The Ju cousins remained in Zhang's residence to give painting lessons to his nephew Zhang Jianmo (1829-1887). After Zhang Jingxiu died in 1864, the Ju cousins returned to Keshan and set up their own studio, *Xiaoyueqin Guan* ("Hall of the Lute of the Whispering Moon"), to teach painting.

The Ju cousins soon acquired great

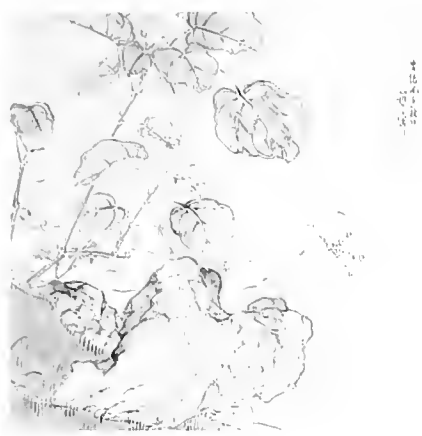


Figure 1. Ju Lian (1828–1904). Flower. Dated to 1876. Album leaf, ink and color on silk; 34.5 x 35 cm. Hong Kong Museum of Art.



Figure 2. Ju Lian (1828–1904). New Year Greetings. Undated. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper; 82 x 47 cm. Art Museum, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

fame in Guangdong as flower-and-bird painters in the boneless style, which they embellished using the *zhuangshui* ("water infusion") and *zhuangfen* ("powder infusion") techniques (see fig. 1).¹⁵ These are puddling techniques, in which clear water or mineral pigments mixed in water, respectively, are dropped onto a still-wet painting surface to create interesting spontaneous effects.¹⁶ The techniques were not original with the Ju cousins, but they greatly refined and controlled them.¹⁷ As the fame of the Ju cousins spread, their style of painting came to be referred to as the Keshan school of painting. Among the students they took on, Gao Jianfu and Chen Shuren eventually achieved success with a revolutionary style of painting that influenced the subsequent course of Chinese painting. In recognition of their Guangdong origins, and to distinguish their painting style from those of their contemporaries, it is referred to as the Lingnan school.

GAO JIANFU AND THE LINGNAN SCHOOL OF PAINTING

Gao Jianfu (whose formal name was Lun, and by-name Jueting) was born in 1879, the fourth of six sons in an impoverished family in Yuangang village, Panyu district, Guangdong. At age fourteen Gao Jianfu became a painting student of Ju Lian in nearby Keshan. Out of sympathy for Jianfu's straitened circumstances, Ju Lian invited the youth to live as well as study at the *Xiaoyueqin Guan*. There he learned from Ju Lian to paint birds, flowers, and insects. This traditionally decorative genre was usually executed in a realistic, descriptive style (*xie sheng*, literally, "grasp the life"), but Ju Lian carried this approach further than usual by growing flowers and plants in his garden so as to study them in their natural setting, and by observing live insects in bottles. From his teacher's emphasis on close observation of nature, Gao Jianfu gained an early appreciation for naturalism.

Besides flower-and-bird subjects, Ju Lian painted figures and landscapes. He also liked to depict mundane details of everyday life among the poor, and subjects traditionally considered too "vulgar" for painting, such as a preserved duck (see fig. 2).¹⁸ Ju Lian's sympathy for poor people is further expressed in the

inscriptions that he wrote on many of his paintings: "Yue ou" song lyrics in the Cantonese vernacular, often humorous or satirical, and popular among the common people. Zhao Ziyong, a Guangdong scholar and painter active in the late eighteenth–early nineteenth century, was credited with popularizing this vernacular literary form in Guangdong by publishing an anthology of his own compositions in 1828.¹⁹ Usually these ballads take as their theme poverty, class oppression, and social injustice.²⁰

Ju Lian's compassion for the circumstances of the unprivileged influenced the future development of Gao Jianfu's art. The goals of rectifying injustice and restoring human dignity eventually became the basis of the humanistic content of the Lingnan school of painting.

While studying in Keshan, Gao Jianfu met Chen Shuren, also a student of Ju Lian, and a lifelong friendship began. From 1892 on, Gao and Chen assiduously refined their skill in Ju Lian's style of painting. In 1899 Gao became acquainted with one of Ju's senior students, Wu Deyi (1864–1928), whose family collection in *Jingxiang Ciguan* ("Hall of the Pool of the Fragrant Mirror") was rich in the paintings and calligraphies of traditional masters. Through his acquaintance with Wu, Gao was able to view that collection as well as the collections of Wu's many prominent friends. These opportunities greatly expanded Gao's artistic horizon and gave him a deeper understanding of the Chinese artistic tradition.

In 1903 Gao Jianfu left Keshan for Macao and enrolled at the Gechi College. There he learned charcoal sketching from a French painter known by his Chinese name, Maila. For the first time Gao applied himself to Western realism. Beginning in 1905, he taught art at the Public School of Guangdong, the Shimin School, the Shushan School, and the Guangdong Higher College of Education. Meeting the Japanese art teacher Yamamoto Baigai at the Shushan School marked a turning point in Gao's life. Yamamoto admired Gao's paintings. He taught Gao Japanese and encouraged him to study in Japan.

Yamamoto was impressed by the style of painting practiced by Gao at that time, which reflected the delicacy and

refinement of Ju Lian's style of painting, as is evident in an early work in four panels by Gao, *Flowers, Melon, Fish, and Insects* (cat. 34).²¹ The paintings, dated to 1905, are in the boneless style and utilize the *zhuangfen* and *zhuangshui* techniques, showing Gao's indebtedness to his Keshan teacher during this period of his career.

In Macao, with its prominent Portuguese presence, Gao became increasingly aware of the need for political reform in China in the face of foreign intrusion, internal instability, and widespread poverty and illiteracy. As an artist by training, he evolved the idea of reforming Chinese painting as a way to combat illiteracy and to propagate the idea of reform in all levels of society. In 1906 he organized the Chinese Painting Research Society to promote changes in art.

To better equip himself in both theory and practice, Gao Jianfu resolved to go to Japan in 1906. He studied art at the Tokyo Institute of Fine Arts in 1907. Soon, through the introduction of two friends from Guangdong, Liao Zhongkai (1878–1925) and He Xiangning (1878–1972),²² Gao joined the *Tongmeng hui* ("Alliance Society"), a radical political society founded by Sun Yat-sen in Tokyo in 1905 to advocate the overthrow of the reigning Qing dynasty in China. In Japan in 1906 the paths of Gao Jianfu and Chen Shuren again converged. Chen, who had joined the Alliance Society a year earlier, had also gone to Japan to study art.

In the next year Gao Jianfu returned to Guangzhou and took his younger brother Gao Qifeng with him back to Tokyo to study art. Gao Qifeng soon joined the Alliance Society and embraced its revolutionary mission, but he did not attend any established art institution. Before going to Japan, he had undertaken an apprenticeship in glass painting in Guangzhou; in Japan he took painting lessons from Tanaka Raishō (1868–1940), a skillful painter of the *Nihonga* ("modern Japanese style painting") school. His paintings, incorporating Japanese themes and Western techniques, show an intensely romantic and poetic lyricism.

The first decade of the 1900s marked the height of controversy in the Japanese art world between traditional and Western-style painters. The first generation of Meiji period (1868–1912) Western-

style artists worked in a plein-air, realist style, painting in natural light and using luminous colors. These Western concepts were also adopted by such *Nihonga* painters as Yokoyama Taikan (1868–1958), Hashimoto Gahō (1835–1908), and Takeuchi Seihō (1864–1942). Gao Jianfu was attracted to *Nihonga* painting, to which he brought a softer, more gentle touch that combined Chinese, Japanese, and Western elements.

The Gao brothers applied themselves to the study of perspective, light, shading, and other elements of Western art. They focused on various manifestations of naturalism, ranging from French academicism to Post-Impressionism and Fauvism, brought home from Europe by Japanese artists. Gao Jianfu became a member of the *Hakuba-kai* ("White Horse Society") in Tokyo, which was established by plein-air painters as a forum for Meiji period Western-style painting; at about the same time he also became a member of the *Taiheiyō Gakai* ("Pacific Art Society"), founded by artists who had studied neoclassicism under Jean Paul Laurens in Europe and who were eager to break with the dominant plein-air school. The fact that Gao Jianfu joined two societies representing opposing approaches to painting indicates that he was anxious to absorb the latest developments in art, especially the interpretations of Western ideas by Japanese artists. The *Nihonga* style of rendering Japanese subjects in a manner that combined Western realism with Asian lyricism struck a sympathetic chord in Gao Jianfu, who was searching for a style appropriate to the needs and taste of his own particular milieu.

Gao Qifeng later explained why he considered the study of Western art to be a positive component of his artistic development:

I took up the study of Western art, paying particular attention to portrait painting, geometric drawing, light and shade, perspective, etc. I then picked out the finest points of Western art such as the masterful strokes of the pen, composition, inking, coloring, inspiring background, poetic romance, etc. and applied them to my Chinese techniques. In short, I tried to retain what was exquisite in the Chinese art of painting, and at the same time to adopt the best

*methods of composition which the world's art schools had to offer, thereby blending the East and the West into a harmonious whole.*²⁴

By choosing and adapting aspects of Western painting—content, style, techniques—into their native Chinese practice, the Gao brothers created a synthesis in which the influence of Chinese traditional painting was decreased. They continued to experiment with various combinations of old and new, East and West.

The Gao brothers were also impressed by the artistic ambience of Meiji Japan, with its abundance of exhibitions, art publications and printing, a formal system of art schools and academies, artist associations, and industrial and applied arts. These institutions and practices were later introduced into China in order to extend the social basis of art.²⁵

Gao Jianfu's studies were terminated in 1908 when he was sent back to Guangzhou to assume leadership of that city's branch of the Alliance Society. Gao Qifeng also returned to China to assist his brother in the revolutionary struggle. In China, Gao Jianfu organized the *Zhina Ansha Tuan* ("China Assassination Group") to assassinate senior Manchu officials, and also oversaw the manufacture of bombs supplied to the revolutionaries. In September, during the last (and successful) uprising of Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary army, Gao Jianfu commanded the local militia of the *Dongxinjun* ("Eastern New Army") in its take-over of Guangzhou.

Once Guangzhou was taken by the revolutionaries, Gao Jianfu immediately resigned all political and military obligations, and refused the offered post of governor of Guangzhou. His mission was a revolution in art, and the success of the political revolution allowed him to resume that mission.

In 1912 Gao Jianfu and Gao Qifeng went to Shanghai to disseminate their new ideas about art. With a special subsidy from the Nationalist Government, they founded the *Shenmei Shuguan* ("Aesthetics Book Company") at Shanghai and published *Zhenxiang huabao* ("True Record Illustrated Magazine"), a publication devoted to the promotion of *xin guohua* ("New National Painting").

This "New National Painting" combined traditional Chinese ink and brush techniques with realistic treatment of light and shade and perspective. It also differed in content from traditional Chinese painting, embracing contemporary themes and subject matter from everyday life in the new era. The creation of a new pictorial language, comprehensible to the masses, was essential for the propagation of the new art. Gao Jianfu thought that for the common people, looking at classical painting is "like forcing uninitiates to read a 'book of heaven'; unable to comprehend, they are unable to appreciate."²⁶

The point was communion with the masses. For Gao Jianfu, traditional Chinese painting had failed in all its social functions except serving the elite few in society. He was concerned that his paintings communicate his messages. Their subject matter, style, and execution should be equivalent to the content, articulation, and delivery of a spoken statement. They should "speak to" viewers. Even viewers with no previous training in art appreciation would be able to respond immediately and directly to painted images that related to their own sensory and mental experiences.

Gao Jianfu's vision of *xin guohua* is best understood within the context of the intellectual movement of his time, in particular, the advocacy by Hu Shi (1891–1962) and Chen Duxiu of the vernacular as a "national language" (*guoyu*),²⁷ replacing classical Chinese in literature. The aim was emancipation: to free written language from class biases and popular superstitions, from nonscientific inexactness, from literary affectation and obscurantism—and to use this emancipated language to liberate the people and the nation. The term *guoyu* had been used by students returning from Japan in 1906, the year of Gao Jianfu's first sojourn there.

Parallels can also be drawn between Hu Shi's criticism of traditional Chinese literature and the criticism of traditional Chinese painting. In proclaiming the death of classical literature, Hu Shi declared that "Chinese literature produced by the literary men during the last two thousand years is a dead literature, written in a dead language. A dead lan-

guage cannot produce a living literature."²⁷ And he asked, rhetorically, "If the writing does not mean anything or does not reflect reality, what is the use of having a literary style?"²⁸ According to Chen Duxiu, "If we want to reform Chinese painting, we have to revolutionize the paintings of the [Four] Wangs [four seventeenth-century Orthodox masters]. In order to transform Chinese painting, we have to grasp the spirit of realism in Western painting."²⁹

Just as use of the vernacular would make literature accessible and meaningful to the common people, so realism would bring art closer to people's everyday lives. Therefore, in order to achieve an effective visual style, Gao Jianfu set out to reconstitute his pictorial form and content with a "vernacular" graphic vocabulary and syntax based on realism. For a largely illiterate population, visual art would be a more effective tool of communication than literature. A more accessible style and content would enable viewers to recognize forms and comprehend their meanings. The names given to the new vernacular literature and to the Lingnan school's syncretic style of painting make plain the public goals they were meant to serve: "National Language" (*guoyu*) and "New National Painting" (*xin guohua*).

For a picture to put across a message, it must first engage the viewers' attention. Therefore visual attractiveness was an important requirement of Lingnan school paintings; sometimes the element of shock was also utilized. Gao Jianfu had once shocked his countrymen by painting an airplane and a tank in a traditional landscape.

Gao Jianfu's ideas of popularizing art were also enthusiastically embraced by the then minister of education, Cai Yuanpei (1867–1940). For Cai, aesthetic education was a mission; it was one way to reform, at every level of society, the thought patterns that were choking China and its people. To promote art education, he proposed founding art academies, establishing art classes in school curriculums, and forming art research societies. Cai proposed "replacing religion with aesthetic education" (*"meiyu dai zongjiao shuo"*) in order to cultivate a sense of mission (*"shiming"*) about the sal-

vation of the nation. He also advocated "saving the nation with art" (*"meiyu jiuguo"*).³⁰

The following statement by Gao Qifeng elaborates on that sense of mission:

*The student of art must try to adopt a much loftier viewpoint and imagine himself charged with altruistic mission which requires him to consider his fellows' miseries and afflictions as his own. He will then work hard on the production of only such pictures as will effect the betterment of man's nature in particular and bring about an improvement of society in general, thereby presenting the new spirit of the art in all its glory and grandeur.*³¹

Encouraged by this national policy on aesthetic education, the Gao brothers vigorously promoted their new ideas through their publications and won many converts.

The young Xu Beihong, destitute and struggling in Shanghai at the time, was discovered by the Gao brothers, who commissioned him to create illustrations in a realistic style for their *True Record Illustrated Magazine*. Although it would be difficult to establish a direct relation between the revolutionary ideas of the Gao brothers and Xu Beihong, whose style is distinctly different from theirs, they clearly had a significant impact on him.

About 1912 Gao Jianfu also founded the Chinese Ceramics Company at Jingdezhen in Jiangxi. The modernization of a traditional industry was a part of Gao Jianfu's program of saving the country through art and industry. But the enterprise failed for lack of support from the unstable, inexperienced, and disunited government.

Chen Shuren, who had returned from Japan after finishing his course of studies at the Kyoto Art Academy in 1912, joined the Gao brothers in Shanghai in their new publishing and ceramics ventures. Their collaboration was brief, because Chen left for Tokyo the next year to study literature at Rikkyō University. After graduating in 1916, Chen held a succession of administrative posts in the Nationalist government.³²

Unfortunately, government funding of the *True Record* ran out, and the Gao brothers had to leave Shanghai and



Figure 3. Gao Jianfu (1879–1951). Five-Storeyed Tower. Dated to 1926. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper; 80 x 42 cm. Hong Kong Museum of Art.

return to Guangzhou, where they continued to disseminate their new theories about Chinese art. Gao Qifeng established a studio called *Tianfeng Lou* ("Pavilion of Heavenly Wind") to teach painting. Gao Jianfu became head of the Handicraft Bureau of Guangdong and at the same time the headmaster of the Provincial Technical School. In 1921 he organized the First Provincial Art Exhibition in Guangdong. Through publication, the promotion of fine and applied arts, and the organization of exhibitions, Gao Jianfu created an artistic program similar to what he had found in Japan. In 1923 he founded the *Chunshui Huayuan* ("Spring Slumber Painting Studio") in Guangzhou. As his work gained attention and momentum, his "New National Painting" was fiercely rebuked by traditionalists in Guangzhou, whose organizational base was the Guhai Painting Cooperative.³³ The studio became the base of the Lingnan school of painting and a center from which to counter these assaults.

Gao's struggle for artistic reform was made more difficult by China's political instability. For Gao, the "spirit of the nation" resided in the ideals of his spiritual and revolutionary mentor, Sun Yat-sen, who died in 1925. But the political turmoil that followed the success of the 1911 Revolution showed him a turbulent reality that seemed quite resistant to revolutionary zeal. The struggle between the Nationalists and the Communists, warlordism, and the threats of foreign invasion spelled multiplying turmoil. After all the time and energy that Gao Jianfu spent in trying to bring harmony and progress to his country, he was disheartened to see the country slipping into greater chaos. Even if foreign aggressions could be checked, the complexity and intensity of the domestic power struggle stood in the way of achieving the youthful revolutionaries' idealistic vision.

In 1926 Gao Jianfu completed one of his masterpieces, the *Five-Storeyed Tower* (fig. 3), an image of a Chinese landmark refracted through characteristic Meiji period romanticism.³⁴ His inscription reads: "All that remains of the perilous high tower after myriad destructive calamities are creeping grass and empty mist, pale [vision of distant] crows and

fading dusk." Built in 1380, the five-storied tower atop Yuexiu Mountain in Guangzhou was originally known as Wanghai Lou ("Tower Overlooking the Seas"), then as Zhenghai Lou ("Sea-Subduing Tower"). It functioned as an observation tower—an early-warning system against the Japanese pirates then pillaging the coastal villages of China. Repeatedly destroyed in episodes of military and civil unrest, the tower was used as a stable and an army kitchen during the civil wars following the 1911 revolution. In 1928 it was reinforced with steel and concrete. It is now the home of the Guangdong Provincial Museum and one of the Eight Scenic Spots in Guangzhou.

To this image of endurance and public service, Yu Youren (1878–1964), a friend and admirer of Gao Jianfu, added the inscription "*gaizao guohun*" ("Rebuild the national spirit"), aptly summarizing Gao Jianfu's revolutionary ideal. The same necessity of a fundamental change in thinking is also expressed in the writing of Lu Xun (1881–1936), who stressed "*gaibian jingshen*" ("changing the essence and the spirit").³⁵

In his efforts to renew Chinese painting, Gao Jianfu was concerned less about appearances than about a new way of thinking:

*The major difference between modern painting and ancient painting ought not to be just about form but about thinking. Thinking is primary to the subject; representational technique is secondary. If primary and secondary are reversed, the resulting painting, no matter how new and shocking, cannot be counted as modern painting.*³⁶

Gao Jianfu's *Five-Storeyed Tower* may symbolize *guohua*—the essential "Chineseness" of modern Chinese painting, which persisted despite the incorporation of new techniques and hence new visual effects. Erosion of the national spirit, like repeated destruction of the tower, would lead to a radical loss of this essential Chinese-ness in life as well as in art.

After Zhongshan Memorial Hall was built in 1926 to honor Sun Yat-sen as the "Father of the Nation," the Guangdong government bought Gao Qifeng's *Eagles*, *White Horse*, and *Lion* and put them on display there. None of these paintings has survived. But judging from extant paint-

ings of these subjects by Gao Qifeng, they would have shown the stylistic influence of his Japanese models—influence that is clearly visible in *Monkeys and Snowy Pine* (cat. 37)³⁷ and *Spring Rain by Willow Pond* (cat. 36),³⁸ the two paintings by him that are included in the current exhibition. After returning from Japan to China after less than two years of study, Gao Qifeng continued to refine the techniques learned by studying the Japanese artists who had impressed him most. Much of the appeal of Gao Qifeng's paintings comes from the great beauty and sympathy of his images, as well as from the lyrical quality he achieved through skillful portrayal of light and atmosphere. Indeed, his best-known paintings are his attractive, discerning portrayals of large birds and animals. His works never carry any overt political message. If any symbolism—of human heroism, ferocity, or political radicalism—was intended, it was most discreetly conveyed.

By and large, Gao Qifeng followed Gao Jianfu very closely, both stylistically and ideologically, and learned the Keshan style of painting from him. Gao Jianfu, however, had greater exposure to traditional Chinese painting and in general a more curious and experimental nature, as is demonstrated by the variety of his styles and subjects. Despite Qifeng's statement (quoted above) of the value of introducing Western elements into Chinese art, he, unlike his brother, did not experiment to any great extent with either traditional or Western styles. Even the smaller-scale paintings of his last years give no indication of conscious experimentation.

The more or less parallel development in the Gao brothers' styles continued until the late 1920s, when Gao Jianfu's paintings underwent certain changes. In 1929 Gao Jianfu painted *Eagle* (cat. 39), which bears an inscription that reads:

*I still remember the usurper's shrilling
sounds,
We drunkenly summoned the eagle
north of Xinfeng.
Now all my heroism has dissipated,
In leisure I look at my new painting and
trim [the wick off] the solitary lamp.
[Painted] winter, eighteenth year
[of the Republic of China, i.e., 1929].
Jianfu.³⁹*

The eagle, a symbol of strength, was frequently depicted with great immediacy and directness by the Gao brothers. Here, however, the eagle on a sea-lashed rock, its wings folded, symbolizes the hero (*ying*)—most likely Gao Jianfu himself, briefly resting from struggle and pondering the future. The not very subtle poetic inscription conveys Gao Jianfu's own preference for painting over fighting a battle. In this work the image of the eagle retains vestiges of decorative realism, but the sketchily brushed rocks and waves tend toward abstraction, signaling Gao Jianfu's increasing interest in the abstract qualities of Chinese ink painting. A strong diagonal orientation dominates the composition, creating a dynamic asymmetry that seems to suggest the turbulence of the times as well as Gao Jianfu's personal perturbation.

The year that Gao Jianfu painted *Eagle*, Gao's fellow Cantonese reformer Liang Qichao died. Kang Youwei had died two years earlier, soon after the death of Sun Yat-sen. Not long after Liang died, Gao Qifeng came down with pneumonia so severe that it forced him to retire; he died in 1933 at the relatively early age of forty-four.

Although China's chaotic political situation was a constant source of distress for Gao Jianfu, he continued to attempt remedies. With Chen Shuren, Ding Yanyong (1902–1978), and Chen Zhifo (1896–1962), he founded the Aesthetics Institute in Guangzhou, devoted to reforming Chinese art. Ding, Chen Shuren, and Chen Zhifo, having studied in Japan, were familiar with the concept of integrating Western elements into Asian art, and supported Gao Jianfu's purpose. Again, their efforts were fiercely opposed by the traditionalists of the Guihai Painting Cooperative, now reorganized into the Chinese Painting Research Society.⁴⁰ The conservatives contended that traditional Chinese painting was inherently able to renew itself, and that the introduction of Western elements created an eccentric, if not monstrous, hybrid, whereas Gao saw the infusion of elements of Western realism—"the painting of compromise"—as the best way to revitalize Chinese painting. In a brief account of his life's work, Gao recalled those heated exchanges:

After my brother and I followed Premier [Sun] in political revolt, I felt that there was an urgent need to renew the art of our nation. . . . In the last thirty years, the trumpets were blown; flags were waved, revolution in art was shouted . . . out of the desire to inaugurate a type of contemporary art for the Republic of China. In the past decade, [I have been] subjected to various kinds of attacks, oppressions, insults. It was because the traditional concepts of the conservative painters are more poisonous than the poison of emperors.⁴¹

His reaction to the attacks was to expand his search for revivifying elements with which to stimulate creativity in the etiolated Chinese tradition. Perhaps he also began to question the notion of looking only to the West for a social or cultural solution to the stagnation of Chinese art.

To understand modern Chinese painting, one must first understand the origin and development of ancient Chinese painting, its philosophy and styles, because modern Chinese painting is derived from ancient Chinese painting. A contemporary painter should first understand what he is doing, and for what and for whom he is doing it. To promote contemporary Chinese painting, ideally a painter should show considerable proficiency in both Chinese and Western painting, [and be able] to bridge the gap between the East and the West. I think we should not only take in elements of Western painting. If there are good points in Indian painting, Egyptian painting, Persian painting, or the masterpieces of other countries, we should embrace all of them, too, as nourishment for our Chinese painting.⁴²

In 1931 he traveled to India to see the ancient Buddhist sculptures in the Ajanta cave-monasteries and to trek in the Himalayas. He also visited Burma. Also about this time he turned for solace to Buddhism. Gao's revolutionary fervor subsided after his trip to India, perhaps as a result of the quietist teachings of Buddhism.

Late in 1934 Gao Jianfu painted *Stupa Ruins in Burma* (cat. 38),⁴³ a work stylistically close to his *Five-Storied Tower* and equally evocative of melancholy. The brief

inscription reads, "Painted four days before the Double Ten Festival in the twenty-third year [of the Republic of China, i.e., 1934]." The Double Ten Festival is National Day, 10 October (i.e., the tenth day of the tenth month), the day when Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary army overthrew the Manchu dynasty and founded the Republic. The melancholy mood of the painting undoubtedly reflects grief over Gao Qifeng's death the preceding year and over the Japanese seizure of Manchuria in 1931–1932.

Compared with *Five-Storied Tower*, painted eight years earlier, the Burmese scene, also set at dusk, is even more desolate. Except for the homing birds disappearing into the horizon beyond the pagoda, nothing moves. The animals guarding the four cardinal points of the stupa—a structure containing Buddhist sacred relics—being carved in stone, only heighten the stillness of the abandoned site.

On 21 October 1934 the army of the Chinese Communist party started the six-thousand-mile journey on foot from Jiangxi Province to Yan'an in Shaanxi, now known as the Long March. Its aim was to avoid annihilation by the Nationalists, whose military capabilities were being employed less to resist the escalating Japanese aggression than to crush their Communist rivals for eventual control of the country.

In the spring of 1935 Gao Jianfu visited Chen Shuren in Nanjing. In one of four poems that Chen Shuren dedicated to Gao, Chen's mood seems somber:

Dedicating to you four poems written in the ram,

Scrutinizing them and finding them not so wonderful;

A personality like mine, detached and indifferent,

Who would have understood me besides Jianfu?⁴⁴

One year earlier, his eldest and favorite son—Russian-educated Chen Fu (1907–1934)—had been assassinated by right-wing members of the Nationalist Party in Nanjing. Additionally, he found the increasingly totalitarian tendencies within the Nationalist party (Guomindang) discouraging, making him strongly ambivalent about his lifelong commitment to the party.⁴⁵

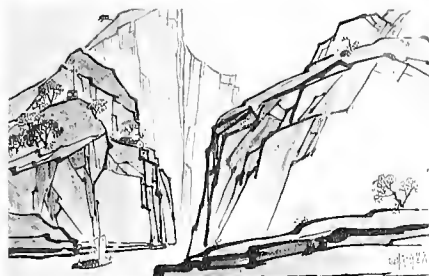


Figure 4. Chen Shuren (1884–1948). *Autumn in Guimen*. Dated to 1943. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper. Hong Kong Museum of Art.

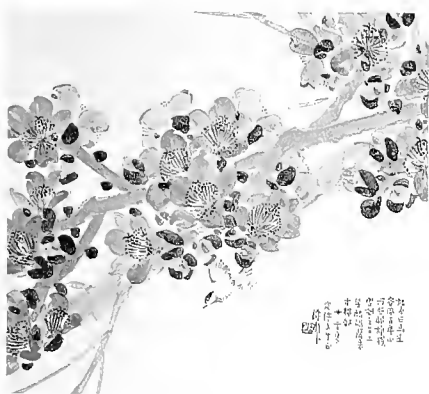


Figure 5. Chen Shuren (1884–1948). *Kapok and Partridge*. Dated to 1947. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper. Hong Kong Museum of Art.

Chen's political career—from 1911 until his death he served the Nationalist government almost continuously in domestic and foreign affairs—gave him the opportunity to travel extensively in China. His earlier paintings still show the influence of Ju Lian and the *Nihonga* style, but the prodigious amount of sketching that he did during his travels shows him simplifying his style, abandoning complex compositions and meticulous technique. The linearity of those pencil and ink sketches soon made its way into his ink painting. In his landscape paintings he minimized the use of traditional texture strokes (fig. 4).⁴⁶ By freeing himself from the conventions of traditional painting, he developed striking graphic compositions of great simplicity. His painting of the red kapok tree—a symbol of the heroes of the revolution—was particularly popular among his admirers (see fig. 5),⁴⁷ and the kapok blossom became an emblem of Lingnan school painting. Because Chen, unlike Gao Jianfu and Gao Qifeng, did not teach art, his highly personalized style of painting was passed on only to members of his immediate family.⁴⁸

In Paris in September 1935 the Prussian Institute of Fine Arts of Berlin organized an exhibition of Chinese painting that included work by Gao Jianfu. The satisfaction that Gao would naturally have felt was marred by a large-scale student demonstration on 9 September, organized by the Communist Party to protest the Nationalist government's failure to effectively resist the Japanese invasion of north China.

In 1936 Gao Jianfu was appointed a professor of fine arts of the National Central University in Nanjing, the nation's capital. Japanese aggression became ever bolder and more successful. That spring Gao Jianfu painted *Pine Tree* (cat. 35),⁴⁹ using bold, forceful calligraphic brush strokes. The accompanying enigmatic inscription reads, "The ghostly lamp shining [darkly] like varnish on the pine blossoms." Whatever Gao's precise meaning, it is clear that this pine is not an auspicious symbol of vigorous long life. A wave of pessimism had swept over Gao, a sense of doom which the events of 1937 showed to have been justified. In July of that year the Japanese invaded

Shanghai, and had it under their control by November; that same month they also captured Nanjing, and punished the city for its resistance by slaughtering some one hundred and fifty thousand residents—a massacre that became known as "the rape of Nanjing." Gao hurriedly left Nanjing for Guangzhou.

Fury against the Japanese aggression swept the nation's intellectuals, and may have helped rekindle Gao Jianfu's combative spirit.⁵⁰ In 1936–1937 he delivered a series of lectures at the National Central University in which he systematically presented his views on the reform of Chinese painting. These lectures were published as *My Views on Modern National Painting* (*Wo de xiandai guohua guan*). It is perhaps one of the most coherently articulated arguments by an early twentieth-century artist on the reform of Chinese painting. Running through these published lectures is a streak of nationalist sentiment, with Japan as the immediate antagonist. Ultimately, though, the concept of self-strengthening and the advocacy of a national language and a national form of painting were continuous reactions to foreign provocation dating from the mid-nineteenth century. Moreover, the ideal of revolution was bound up with China's liberation from monarchical as well as foreign oppression. All of these various aspects of nationalism informed Gao Jianfu's political ideology and his ideas on reforming Chinese art. Revolution in Chinese painting, according to Gao, thus inaugurated the "New National Painting." Ironically, Japan had been the nurturing ground for his concept of the "New National Painting," to which he was to devote the rest of his life.

As the Japanese army advanced toward Guangzhou late in 1938, Gao Jianfu moved his family to Macao, staying in the Puji Monastery, where he soon reestablished the Spring Slumber Painting Studio. In Macao, more tragedy struck: the death of his son in 1939, followed soon after by that of his wife. As a diversion from his sorrow, he immersed himself in painting and in organizing the "Exhibition of Works by the Ten Artists of the Spring Slumber Painting Studio," sponsored by the Macao Chamber of Commerce.

That summer, physically and emo-



Figure 6. Gao Jianfu (1879–1951). *Moths Diving into the Flame*. Dated to 1939. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper; 96.5 x 47 cm. Hong Kong Museum of Art.

tionally spent, Gao painted *Moths Diving into the Flame* (fig. 6),³⁴ adding as inscription an original Yue ou composition by Zhao Ziyong:

"Do not say that fire is not feared. Try to look at that moth fluttering to and fro over the fire. It just has to touch the deep bottom of the lamp. How could it have known that an inch or so is like a ten-thousand-foot-deep abyss? No matter how [hard] it flies, it could not escape. It is not known how many have perished in chasing the torrents and following the waves. How can you imitate the butterfly waking from the dream? Had you comprehended [the riddle of] the flower, you would have been spared delusion as of a mind spellbound by the flying demon". I have borrowed this Yue ou ballad by Zhao Ziyong for my inscription, [hoping by its] profundity to comprehend society, [using it as a vessel in which] to lodge my grief. Autumn of the twenty-eighth year [of the Republic of China, i.e., 1939].

Jianfu

Reiterating and augmenting the despondency of the image and the inscription is the text of the seal that Gao impressed at the lower right: "Man has not achieved fame and the body has died" (*nan'er bu cheng ming shen yi si*).

The imagery of Zhao's verse is Buddhist and Daoist. The dream and the butterfly epitomize the Daoist parable regarding illusion and reality: having dreamed he was a butterfly, the sage Zhuangzi could not be sure, on waking, whether he was a man who had dreamed he was a butterfly or a butterfly now dreaming that he was a man who had dreamed he was a butterfly. The implication is that all experience is at bottom illusory, and that one who understands that suffering is illusory thereby does not suffer. "Comprehending the riddle of the flower" refers to the famous moment when the Buddha paused in his teaching and silently held up a flower. All were puzzled except one disciple, who smiled. To that one, whose smiling showed his understanding, the Buddha entrusted the transmission of his Teaching. Not coincidentally, Chen Shuren had called himself "man holding a flower and smiling."

The inscription shows fascination with metaphysical questions and also reveals the tensions and contradictions

that plagued Gao. He was attracted to the intellectual content of literati painting, but he had spent his entire life struggling to eradicate the distance between the intelligentsia and the commoners. The choice of a verse by Zhao Ziyong, an accomplished Confucian scholar equally adept at writing popular ballads, may have eased the contradictions. The issue of *ya* ("refined") versus *shu* ("vulgar" or "unrefined") has been a point of great contention in modern Chinese painting, especially as regards the aesthetic achievement of the Lingnan masters and the New National Painting. That unrefinement could be valuable in disseminating culture throughout Chinese society was first posited by the modernizers. Advocates of the New Chinese Painting struggled to determine the definitions, balance, and uses of *ya* and *shu* that would be serviceable to China's modern situation.

Both the painting and the inscription of Gao's *Moths Diving into the Flame* are reminders to the Japanese of their folly and their inevitable death. At the same time, Gao may also have pitied them, as automatons blindly reenacting an age-old script of human error and doom. To underscore his ironic treatment of the subject, and hence his pessimism, Gao abandoned his usual consummate draftsmanship. At the same time, Gao's love of nature and absorption in its minutest details invested his subjects with emotional resonances far beyond their simple, overt meanings. This intensity of emotion in his art suffused it with penetrating poignancy, and that is what moved people.

When the war ended in 1945 with the Japanese surrender, Gao moved back to Guangzhou and continued teaching at the Spring Slumber Painting Studio. In 1949, when the Nationalist party retreated to Taiwan, leaving mainland China in the hands of the Communist party, he fled to Macao. It was his ultimate farewell to his beloved native land. Taking leave of his country also meant abandoning a mission that had lost much of its purpose. He became more introverted. The paintings of his final years are intimate and expressive. He spent his remaining years teaching and painting, and he died in Macao in May 1951.



Figure 7. Li Xiongcai (b. 1910). Landscape After Mi Fu. Dated to 1986. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper; 134.7 x 67.5 cm. Collection of Lai Sek-nang.

FOLLOWERS OF THE LINGNAN SCHOOL

Gao Jianfu and Gao Qifeng taught art in several institutions, but many of their most notable followers were trained in just two of them: Gao Jianfu's Spring Slumber Painting Studio and Gao Qifeng's Pavilion of Heavenly Wind. (Chen Shuren had no formal students.)

Gao Jianfu had many students, whose impact on painting in Guangdong was considerable and longlasting.⁵² The pictures by Li Xiongcai (b. 1910; see fig. 7)⁵³ and Guan Shanyue (b. 1912), who have worked in Guangzhou, display the Lingnan school's picturesque style. These works, with their incorporation of Western naturalism into Chinese ink painting and their nationalistic flavor, set the tone for the Socialist Realist art that predominated in the People's Republic of China, and ensured their makers' importance in the official art world of the new order. The beautiful motherland, the power and grandeur of the dams, bridges, and factories built by the new regime, and the labor of workers, farmers, and soldiers were all immortalized in glorious mural-size paintings. Yang Shanshen (b. 1913), though not a student but an acquaintance of Gao's, is associated with a less political side of the Lingnan school and is now a major proponent of the Hong Kong "flavor" of the Lingnan style. Many second-generation Lingnan school painters have left China for Macao or Hong Kong and thence for North America. Most of them have continued to paint but have lost much of the passion that made the Lingnan school so vital in the time of their masters.

Tianfeng qizi ("Seven Disciples of the Tianfeng Studio") is the collective name for Gao Qifeng's most famous students. The group includes Zhao Shaoang (b. 1905), Zhang Kunyi (1895–1969), Ye Shaobing (1897–1959), Huang Shaoqiang (1900–1942), He Qiyuan (1899–1970), Zhou Yifeng (1890–1942), and Rong Shoushi (1907–?). Except for Huang Shaoqiang, who died before the Communist take-over, all of them left China for Macao or Hong Kong after 1949. Huang Shaoqiang expressed in his art his intense sympathy with the hardships of the common people. He is admired for his stark portrayals of manual laborers (see fig. 8).⁵⁴ His early

death at the age of forty-one cut short a promising career.

Zhao Shaoang, who settled in Hong Kong after 1949, has since then taught literally thousands of students in his Lingnan Painting Studio. His own paintings deal mostly with pleasant, nonpolitical subjects such as flowers-and-birds, fish, and animals, done in a detailed style with considerable popular appeal. By virtue of his success as a painter and an art educator in Hong Kong, the Lingnan style of painting has dominated the art scene there for the last forty years and has influenced a third generation of talented painters. Many of these emigrated from Hong Kong, including Ou Haonian (b. 1935), a student of Zhao Shaoang, who is highly proficient in the execution of the Lingnan style and currently teaches art at the conservative College of Chinese Culture in Taiwan.

In discussions of the followers of the Lingnan school, most of the attention has been focused on those who have emulated Zhao Shaoang perhaps too faithfully. Three non-Cantonese painters who studied with Zhao made successful careers without becoming exponents of the Lingnan school: Fang Zhaolin (b. 1914) (see cat. 189), Zhou Luyun (b. 1924), and Gu Mei (b. 1934) went on to develop their own styles, becoming important figures in a distinctive new wave of Hong Kong painting.⁵⁵

After their tutelage under Zhao Shaoang, both Zhou Luyun and Gu Mei became students of Lu Shoukun (1919–1976). Lu, founder of the New Ink Movement in Hong Kong, undertook his own renewal of Chinese painting by exploring new possibilities based on the intrinsic qualities of Chinese brush and ink, and by creating abstract images to express Zen and Daoist concepts. Both Zhou Luyun (see fig. 9)⁵⁶ and Gu Mei have adopted a nontraditional abstract ink style. Fang Zhaolin, born and raised in China, is a native of Wuxi, Jiangsu. She studied landscape painting with Qian Songyan (1898–1985) (see cat. 154) and flower-and-bird painting with Chen Jiucun. In 1937 Fang went to England to study modern European history at the University of Manchester. In 1950 she went to Hong Kong and resumed her painting studies under Zhao Shaoang.



Figure 8. Huang Shaoqiang (1900–1942). *Stonecutter*. Undated. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper; 72.5 x 32 cm. Hong Kong Museum of Art.

and in 1953 she studied under another painting master, Zhang Daqian (see cats. 44, 45, 178). She took a degree program in Chinese literature and philosophy in 1954 at the University of Hong Kong, followed by two years' study of Chinese literature at Oxford University.

Fang's works have a strikingly vivid quality. In many of them, such as her painting of the cave-dwelling inhabitants of the rugged yellow-earth highland in northeastern China (cat. 189),⁵⁷ or one depicting Vietnamese refugees in rickety rafts battered by an angry sea (fig. 10),⁵⁸ her direct and larger-than-life expression of the struggle for survival is enormously moving. At Oxford Fang wrote her thesis on the *Chu ci* ("Songs of Chu"), a collection of poems attributed to China's first poet to be known by name and dated to about the fourth-third century BCE. Those poems are one of the sources of the strength and power of expression evident in her pictorial commentaries on the heavy social and political burdens of the less fortunate.

Intellectual responses such as those to society and politics hark back to the sentiments that gave rise to the ideals of the Lingnan school. Fang and others like her bridge the ideological gap between the first-generation Lingnan masters and those who have come after them in modern society. Fang has painted large narrative works inspired by events such as the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration (finalizing the return of Hong Kong to China), the Tiananmen Square incident, and the death of Mao's successor Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997). Nationalist sentiments, which loom large in her pictorial persona, are the ideological common ground between Fang and the originators of the Lingnan school and the "New National Painting." Ralph Croizier has pointed out the paradox inherent in the Lingnan school having flourished in the British colony of Hong Kong. But among the Chinese in Hong Kong, colonialism has continued to fuel the forces of nationalism.⁵⁹ Fang Zhaolin, who has lived through more than eight decades of this turbulent century and experienced the history of modern China from the rise of Sun Yat-sen to the demise of colonialism, is perhaps among the most qualified to comment on that

experience. This she does in the form of forceful pictorial commentaries on the significant events that come crowding in on her.

In perpetuating the spirit of revolution of the Lingnan school, its followers are its greatest strength and its greatest weakness. The sheer number of painters practicing the style has propagated Lingnan school painting over a large geographical area, particularly with the massive emigration from Hong Kong (mainly to North America) that has taken place in recent years. A large number of these followers, however, are mere imitators, who copy the style of their masters without individuality or originality. That is one of the reasons some critics have considered the survival of the Lingnan style to be anachronistic. If the Lingnan style is indeed an anachronism in modern society, it will be just as well when it takes its place in history and is succeeded by a changed sensibility, a changed aesthetics, and a changed politics.

CONCLUSION

The compromise that Gao Jianfu believed necessary for the revitalization of Chinese art, and which he attempted to achieve in his own art, can be seen as a strategy of expediency. Inherent in this expediency is the adaptability to change. Gao once declared that "modern painting cannot be separated from the revolutionary need of modern China. Artists have to . . . try hard to improve their personal cultivation for the future development of revolution, in coordination with the various needs of the present."⁶⁰ Thus the mandate of the new painting evolves with time and adapts to the changing political environment. He went on to say that his proposals regarding the revival of the national spirit in order to renew art were valid only

in relation to the present circumstances of [his] nation. In other words, [his ideas] only claim a territory in the modern era. In the history of evolution each era has the unique spirit of that era. Painting has to represent the era. It has to move forward with time, otherwise it will be left behind by time. . . . Today I reform, create. Soon [my creation] gets old. There will be new methods, new theories, requiring reform, re-creation. Actually



Figure 9. Zhou Luyun (b. 1924). *Infinity Landscape III*. Undated. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper; 179 x 97 cm. Hong Kong Museum of Art.

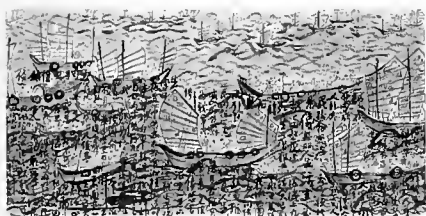


Figure 10. Fang Zhaolin (b. 1914). *Adrift in the Angry Sea*. Dated to 1981. Ink and color on paper; 68.5 x 138 cm. Hong Kong Museum of Art.

[one has to be] perpetually rebelling, perpetually creating, then perpetually progressing.⁶¹

Politics, thus inextricably linked to the mandate of the new painting, became central to the content of Lingnan school painting. For Gao Jianfu, the spirit of modernity was the spirit of revolution, and to keep up with the times one must continue the revolution. Depictions of subjects of daily life by artists of the Lingnan school—even by Gao himself—became ritualized; they were no longer immediate observations of particular realities, but edifying instruments in a campaign for artistic reform.

Perhaps, within this context, it can be said that the Lingnan school was a product of the post-literati era, spawned by forces of political and cultural imperialism. The art that it produced was journalistic, in that its value was based on its relevance to current social and political sensibilities. Therefore, understandably, nationalism was at its emotional center. This explains why its impact on the nation was most widely felt when China was in upheaval. Such political messages cease to function when the need to galvanize national efforts dissipates.

The value of the art of the Lingnan school, or of other reformers of that generation such as Xu Beihong and Lin Fengmian, lies in their deviation from traditional sensibilities; yet there must be a sensibility that is shared by artists and their viewers in order for aesthetic and ideological values to be perceived and shared. As a follower of Sun Yat-sen, Gao Jianfu subscribed to the tenets of democracy. Democracy bestows on the public a right of participation; the artist and his art are part and parcel of society, and only with the people's participation can art and its newly perceived ethics be created.

In retrospect, it is perhaps rather too easy to recount the specifics of the art or the motivation of the Lingnan school masters. But the sum of their expressions in visual form is not as significant as their net ideological value. Unfortunately, as history has taught us, great works of art do not result from a well-thought-out ideological agenda of any kind if it is not accompanied by a pure passion for the expression of beauty.

Throughout Gao Jianfu's artistic career, he kept searching for answers to his ideological questions and aesthetic problems.

The greatest contribution of the Lingnan school to the development of Chinese painting in the twentieth century is the way each of its founders grappled with the new sensibilities in their pursuit of a new art, one in which expanded formal and iconographic content would be allied with truth of artistic expression.

NOTES

1. Kang Youwei, by-name (zi) Guangxia, sobriquets (*hao*) Changsu, Gengxin. Native of Nanhai prefecture, Guangdong Province. Leader of the modernization movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. See Yi Xingguo, ed. *Shiyong Zhongguo mingren cidian* ("Practical Dictionary of Famous Chinese Personalities"), pp. 745-46.
2. Liang Qichao, by-name Zhuoru, sobriquets Rengong, Yinpingshi juren. Native of Xinhui prefecture, Guangdong Province. He studied with Kang Youwei in Guangzhou and was much influenced by reformist thoughts. See *ibid.*, pp. 752-53.
3. Li Shutong (1880-1942), who went to Japan in 1905 to study Western painting and music, was the first Chinese student to study art in Japan. Li Shutong made his mark on the pioneering stages of Western art education in China.
4. Jian Youwen's chronological biography records that Gao Jianfu went to Japan toward the end of 1906. Li Weiming has proposed a 1903 date. See Jian Youwen (Jen Yu-wen), "Gemingshua jia Gao Jianfu: Gailun jianbiao" ("Revolutionary Painter Gao Jianfu: General Discussion and Chronological Biography"), part 2, *Zhuanji wenxue* ("Biographical literature"), vol. 22, no. 2 (February 1973), p. 88. See also Li Weiming, "Gao Jianfu 'liuxue' Ribenkao" ("Examination of Gao Jianfu's 'study' in Japan"), in Shui Tianzhong, Liu Longting, et al., *Jin Bainian Zhongguo hua yanjiu* ("Study of Chinese Painting over the past Hundred Years"), pp. 221-37.
5. In the year 627 the Tang court divided China geographically into ten administrative regions of which Lingnan, covering mainly present-day Guangdong and Guangxi provinces, was one. During the Tang (618-907) and Song (960-1279) periods these southern provinces were considered underdeveloped territories, to which undesirable and criminal elements were banished.
6. Located at the mouth of the Pearl River, it had been the center of foreign trade since the Han (202 BCE-220 CE) dynasty. During the Tang and Song dynasties, Maritime Customs (*shibosi*) were set up there to administer foreign trade. During the Southern Song (1127-1279) and early Ming (1368-1644) period, Guangzhou was eclipsed by Quanzhou, Fujian Province. Although the port of Guangzhou remained open throughout the Ming dynasty, it suffered an inconsistent official policy on and intermittent bans of foreign maritime trade. Its economy surged again

in the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), when in 1685 the Kangxi emperor reopened the coastal ports to trade and established the Guangzhou Custom House. See Zeng Zhaoxuan, *Guangdong lishi dili* ("History and Geography of Guangdong") (Guangzhou, 1991), pp. 219–341.

7. The most comprehensive catalogue of painters from Guangdong Province is Wang Zhaoyong, *Lingnanhua zhenglue* ("Brief Enquiry into Lingnan Painting") (Hong Kong, 1972).

8. Born in Guangdong Province, Lin Liang is recorded as having served in the Provincial Administrations Office in Guangzhou while learning to paint. Success as a painter overtook his administrative career; during the Hongzhi reign-period (1488–1505) he served as a court painter in Beijing, where he attained the honorary rank of commander in the Embroidered Uniform Guard (*Jin yi wei*; the Ming emperors' honorary bodyguard, in which artists might receive sinecure appointments).

9. Acknowledged as the first major landscape painter from Guangdong. See Christina Chu, "An Overview of Li Jian's Painting," in *Chinese Painting Under the Qianlong Emperor*, *Phoebus* 6, no. 2, vol. 2, pp. 295–315.

10. Ju Chao, by-name Meisheng, sobriquets Meichao, Jinshan zhu. Ju Lian, by-name Guquan, sobriquet Keshan laoren. See Hong Kong Museum of Art, *Early Masters of the Lingnan School* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Urban Council, 1983), p. 7.

11. Zhang Jingxiu, native of Boxiacun, Dongguan prefecture, Guangdong. He participated in putting down the Taiping Rebellion. He was an accomplished poet, calligrapher, and painter who specialized in birds, flowers, insects and fish. *Guangdong fengwuzhi* ("Gazette of Customs and Products of Guangdong") (Guangzhou, 1985), pp. 159–60.

12. Song Guangbao, by-name Outang. Native of Wuxian district of Jiangsu Province. In Guangxi, he and Meng Jinyi resided with their patron Li Pingshou. He was skilled at expressionistic, free-brush (*xieyi*) renditions of flower-and-bird subjects in the "boneless" (*mogu*, i.e. without outline) manner. His painting shows strong influence from the Qing dynasty orthodox master Yun Shouping (1633–1690). Hong Kong Museum of Art, *Early Masters of the Lingnan School*, p. 7.

13. Meng Jinyi, by-name Litang. Native of Yanghu (present-day Changzhou), Jiangsu Province. Meng painted flower-and-bird subjects in the manner of Chen Chun (1483–1544), an artist of the Ming dynasty noted for his bold and powerful brushwork. *Ibid.*

14. *Guangdong fengwuzhi*, pp. 159–60.

15. Reproduced in Hong Kong Museum of Art, *Early Masters of the Lingnan School*, pl. 57(viii).

16. The technique was described by Gao Jianfu. "Ju Guquan xiansheng de huafa" ("The painting methods of Ju Guquan [Ju Lian]"), *Guangdong wenwu* ("Guangdong Culture and Archaeology"), vol. 8 (1933), pp. 46–49.

17. In these infusion techniques clear water or mineral pigments dissolved in water, respectively, are dropped onto a still-wet area of a flower-and-bird painting—often a very small area such as a single leaf or petal. Sometimes small clips or splints are used to confine the dropped liquid

within the desired area. As the area dries, water tension causes a watermark to form around its edge, outlining it. Tonal gradations can be created by tilting the paper so that the pigment flows toward the lower edge. As only one area at a time can be treated this way, these techniques are exceptionally painstaking and time-consuming.

18. Reproduced in Hong Kong Museum of Art, *Early Masters of the Lingnan School*, pl. 70.

19. Zhao Ziyong (1793–1846), given name Mingshan, was a native of Nanhai. His orchid and bamboo paintings reflect the style of Zheng Xie (1693–1765). In Guangdong he was best known as a painter of crabs. See City Museum and Art Gallery, *Kuangtung Painting* (Hong Kong, 1973), p. 74.

20. It is said that *Yue ou* appeared as early as the second century. See *Guangdong fengwu zhi*, pp. 233–34.

21. Reproduced in Christina Chu, "Tradition Transformed: The Painting of Gao Jianfu," *Artention*, no. 21 (November–December 1991), p. 52.

22. The young couple had lived next door to the *Xiaoyueqin Guan* when Gao was living and studying there, and Gao had taught painting to He Xiangning. The couple went to study in Japan in 1902. They met Sun Yat-sen in Tokyo in 1903 and soon joined the *Tongmeng hui*. See Zhou Xingliang, *Liao Zhongkai he He Xiangning* ("Liao Zhongkai and He Xiangning") (Henan, 1989), pp. 18–23.

23. Part of the lecture given by Gao Qifeng at Lingnan University, Guangzhou. See Gao Qifeng, *xiansheng yi hua ji* ("Collected Paintings by the Late Gao Qifeng"), nnpaginated.

24. After the 1911 revolution Gao Jianfu, Gao Qifeng and Chen Shuren published in Hong Kong, Guangzhou, and Shanghai various newspapers and journals such as *Shishi huabao* ("News Pictorial") and *Zhongguo bao* ("China Journal").

25. Gao Jianfu, "My views on modern painting" ("Wo de xiandai huihuaguan"), in *Lingnan huapai yanjiu*, vol. 1, p. 19. A "book of heaven" (*tian shu*) is a text, usually illegible, communicated to earth by a deity via a medium and needing interpretation, usually by a Daoist priest.

26. The term *guoyu* was brought to China in 1906, by Chinese students returning en masse from study in Japan, in protest against Japan's territorial ambitions in Shandong following the Russo-Japanese War. Chow, Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), p. 277.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*, p. 276.

29. Cited in Liu Xilin, "Jin bainian shanshui hua de liuxiang he xiaxiang" ("Trends in Chinese Landscape Painting in the Past Hundred Years"), in Shui Tianzhong, Liu Longting, et al., *Jin Bainian Zhongguo hua yanjiu* ("Study of Chinese Painting in the Hundred Years") (Beijing, 1996), p. 71.

30. See Nie Zhenbin, *Cai Yuanpei ji qi meixue sixiang* ("Cai Yuanpei and His Thoughts on Art") (Tianjin, 1984), pp. 357–66.

31. Part of the lecture given by Gao Qifeng at Lingnan University, Guangzhou. See Gao Qifeng, *xiansheng yi hua ji* ("Collected Paintings by the

Late Gao Qifeng"), unpaginated.

32. Chen Shuren occupied various important posts in the government, including that of Minister of Civil Affairs in Guangdong, Acting Governor of Guangdong, Minister of the Labor Department, Member of the Central Committee of Central Affairs, Adviser to the Government, and Personal Adviser to the President.

33. Their opponents in the conservative school included Deng Fen (1892–1963), Li Yanshan (1898–1961), and Huang Boye (1901–1968), among others.

34. Reproduced in Hong Kong Museum of Art, *The Art of Gao Jianfu* (Hong Kong, 1978), pl. 13; also reproduced in Hong Kong Museum of Art, *Twentieth Century Chinese Painting* (Hong Kong, 1978), pl. 13.

35. Cited in Tang Tao, *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue shi* ("History of Modern Chinese Literature") (Beijing, 1979), vol. 1, p. 101.

36. This passage was omitted in Gao Jianfu, "Wo de xiandai guohua guan," in the *Lingnan hua yanjiu* edition, but appears in a Taipei edition of 1975, p. 23.

37. Detail reproduced in *Lingnan huapai yanjiu*, no. 1 (1987), p. 127.

38. Reproduced in Hong Kong Museum of Art, *The Art of Gao Qifeng* (Hong Kong, 1980), pl. 18; Hong Kong Museum of Art, *Twentieth Century Chinese Painting*, pl. 21.

39. Reproduced in Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, *The Art of the Gao Brothers of the Lingnan School*, pl. 22.

40. Membership included Huang Banruo (1901–1968), Pan Dawei (1881–1929), Deng Erya (1883–1955), Deng Fen (1892–1964), Li Fenggong (1884–1967), Zhang Guchu (1891–1968), Zhao Haogong (1881–1946), Pan He (1873–1929), Huang Junbi (1898–1991), Yao Lixiu (1878–1939), Wen Qiqiu (1862–1941), Zhang Xiangming (1911–1958), Li Yanshan (1898–1961), Li Yaoping (1882–1937), Lu Zhenhuan (1889–1979), Shen Zhongqiang (1893–1974), Lu Zishu (1900–1979).

41. Gao Jianfu, "Wo de xiandai guohua guan," *Lingnan huapai yanjiu*, vol. 1, p. 9. See also the 1975 Taipei edition, p. 29.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

43. Reproduced in Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, *The Art of the Gao Brothers of the Lingnan School*, pl. 32.

44. Chen Zhenhun, *Chen Shuren xiansheng nianpu* ("Chronology of Chen Shuren") (Guangzhou, 1993), p. 55.

45. Chen Shuren and his son Chen Fu supported the leftist wing of the Nationalist government, which urged an alliance with the Communist party to fight against the Japanese. That alliance was at all times uneasy and for the most part existed only as rhetoric.

46. Reproduced in Hong Kong Museum of Art, *The Art of Chen Shuren* (Hong Kong, 1981), pl. 34.

47. Reproduced in Hong Kong Museum of Art, *The Art of Chen Shuren*, pl. 52.

48. Chen Shuren's daughter-in-law, Xiao Huilan (1919–1996), learned painting from him. Xiao

Huilan's son Chen Dingzhong (b. 1946) learned to paint from Zhao Shaoang.

49. Reproduced in Hong Kong Museum of Art, *The Art of Gao Jianfu*, pl. 31.

50. Xiao Qian (b. 1911), in a paroxysm of frustration, asked, "what would those who cannot handle guns do?" and answered, "There is a lot we can do. Even holding a pen, it is no longer enough just to 'write articles'." Ba Jin (b. 1904) cried out that writers can not only "express our anger in ink; maybe one day I will use my blood to cleanse this shame. Ba Jin, "Yidian kan-xiang" ("A Bit of Thought"), *Na han*, 1937 (inaugural issue). See also Liu Cengjia, *Chanhuo zhong de Mousi* ("Muse at War"), p. 5.

51. Collection of the Hong Kong Museum of Art. Reproduced in Hong Kong Museum of Art, *The Art of Gao Jianfu*, pl. 39. There is another version of the same painting, painted in Macao in the summer of the year, reproduced in the collection of Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, *The Art of the Gao Brothers of the Lingnan School* (Hong Kong, 1995), pl. 52. In the Chinese University version, the Buddhist seal is not present.

52. Hong Kong Museum of Art, *Tradition and Innovation: Twentieth Century Chinese Painting* (Hong Kong, 1995), pl. 82.

53. Other students of Gao Jianfu are Fang Rending (1901–1975), Rong Dakuai (b. 1900), Li Fuhong (1904–1990), Situ Qi (b. 1906), Zhao Chongzheng (1910–1968), and Li Gemin (1894–1977), etc.

54. Hong Kong Museum of Art, *Tradition and Innovation: Twentieth Century Chinese Painting*, pl. 59.

55. Zhou Luyun, a native of Shanghai, graduated from St. John's University, Shanghai, in 1945 with a B.A. in journalism. Zhou settled in Hong Kong in 1949, where she studied under Zhao Shaoang and then under Lu Shoukun.

56. Reproduced in Hong Kong Museum of Art, *Ink Painting by Hong Kong Artists*, pl. 26.

57. Reproduced in Hong Kong Museum of Art, *Tradition and Innovation: Twentieth Century Chinese Painting*, pl. 135.

58. Reproduced in Hong Kong Museum of Art, *The Passionate Realm: A Restrospective of Fang Zhaohong* (Hong Kong, 1994), pl. 32.

59. See Croizier, Ralph, *Art and Revolution in Modern China: The Lingnan (Cantonese) School of Painting, 1906–1951* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1988), p. 183.

60. Gao Jianfu, "My views on modern painting" ("Wo de xiandai huihuaguan") in 1975 Taipei edition, p. 26.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Traditional Painting in a Transitional Era, 1900–1950

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No period of Chinese history has challenged Chinese painting as greatly as the twentieth century. The overthrow of the Qing dynasty by the Republican revolution of 1911 changed China's political structures and also accelerated and sharpened debates over "traditional" culture, which was the object of both vehement critique and robust defense in the early Republican decades. "This period is characterized by economic strife and political upheavals. The psychological burden carried by the people of China, including her artists, has been enormous. To an extent greater than ever before in Chinese history, intellectuals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have come to question every aspect of Chinese civilization, including her traditional philosophical, political, social, and economic system. All of these systems have undergone dramatic reforms in the twentieth century."¹ Artists of this period, most of whom had been born and educated in imperial China, faced fundamental questions regarding their own positions and the survival of traditional Chinese painting. Like most aspects of Chinese cultural life, what it meant to be an artist in China was radically transformed by the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the classical norms of education and especially by the rapidity of economic change in urban China between 1900 and 1937.

Shanghai, as the economic and cultural center of China, the largest city in East Asia, and the home of the most important school of painting of the nineteenth century, attracted many artists, who came from all parts of China to seek instruction, careers, and patrons. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, after the deaths in rapid succession of such major artists of the Shanghai school as Zhao Zhiqian (1829–1884), Ren Yi (1840–1895), and Xugu (1823–1896), the only surviving senior master was Wu Changshi (1844–1927). He, undoubtedly, was one of the most innovative of early twentieth-century painters, and his career best represents the process of evolution from artistic patterns of late imperial China to those of the modern era. The ultimate ideal of literati painting—to unite poetry, calligraphy, and painting in each work of art—was realized in his pursuits. Wu Changshi may be considered the last

"literati painter" among Shanghai artists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Although Wu rose to prominence in Shanghai only after the Qing dynasty's fall, he had lived for most of his life under Manchu imperial rule, had received the classical education of a scholar-official of that last imperial era, and had experienced to the full the social chaos that attended the last phase of the dynasty.² He was born into a scholarly family in straitened circumstances in a village near Anji, Zhejiang. In 1860, when he was seventeen, Taiping rebel forces captured his village, which left him homeless and wandering with his father in northern Zhejiang and along the Anhui border.³ In 1864 the father and son returned to Anji and started a new life in the town. Within two years Wu Changshi passed the local civil-service examination and received the *xiuca* degree (the lowest of the three degrees afforded by the Qing examination system). Later he studied Classics and literature under the well-known scholars Yu Yue (1821–1907) and Yang Yan (1819–1896), at the same time pursuing seal carving and calligraphy. Over the years he traveled between Suzhou and Shanghai and took occasional trips to Hangzhou, Nanjing, and Tianjin. Only the 1894–1895 Sino-Japanese War took him farther north. After a series of lowly clerical jobs, he finally received an appointment in 1899 as magistrate of Andong (present-day Lianshui) in Jiangsu Province, but resigned after one month. Through friends and patrons, however, he got to know Wu Yun (1811–1883), a Suzhou painter, calligrapher, and connoisseur, and the learned and famous antiquarian Wu Dacheng (1835–1902), who broadened his knowledge of antiquities and opened his eyes to new stylistic possibilities in calligraphy and seal carving.

As with Zhao Zhiqian, who had practiced calligraphy and seal carving before painting, Wu Changshi did not become a serious painter until long after he had taken up seal carving and calligraphy. In painting as in calligraphy, *jìnshiqi* ("antiquarian epigrapher's taste," i.e., a deliberately naïve, slightly awkward manner derived ultimately from calligraphy on Han [206 BCE–220 CE] and Wei [386–535] dynasty steles unearthed during the late



Figure 1. Wu Changshi (1844–1927).
Antiquities. 1902. Hanging scroll, rubbing,
ink, and color on paper. Zhejiang Provincial
Museum, Hangzhou.

Qing) was a very important aspect of the style developed by Shanghai school artists. It was well known that Yangzhou school painter Jin Nong (1687–1763) and others derived their script styles from ancient calligraphies carved into stone steles and from rubbings taken from these. Since the arts of calligraphy and paintings share the same mediums, and since the same artist often practiced both, it was only natural that elements of antique calligraphic style, transmitted in the form of carvings on stone steles, should have entered Wu's painting. In each of his works, the strong, fine design is made up of lines that seem to have been painted slowly and deliberately, as if chiseled in stone. Wu's seal carving and calligraphy were also strongly influenced by the styles of Deng Shiru (1743–1805) and Zhao Zhiqian.

As a painter, Wu Changshi was basically self-taught, except for some initial instruction from Pan Zhiqi, a specialist in plum blossoms. His early paintings show the influences of early Qing masters such as Zhu Da (1626–1705), Shitao (1642–1707?), and Jin Nong, and of his own contemporaries, especially Zhao Zhiqian. His desire to paint must have been intensified by his sojourns in Shanghai, where he was surrounded by a widening circle of painters, including Zhang Xiong (1803–1886), Hu Yuan (1823–1886), Yang Borun (1837–1911), and above all Ren Yi. It was Ren Yi who brought out Wu Changshi's latent talent.⁴ Wu's early paintings are largely of blossoming plum branches, in a drawing style that emphasized strong gestural brushwork similar to his early *shiguwen* ("Stone Drum script") calligraphy.

From the late 1890s to the mid-1910s—from his mid-fifties to his early seventies—Wu Changshi's art reached its maturity, but in his pursuit of a political career he was unsuccessful.⁵ Wu was versed in the Classics, and as a former minor official he held some claim to literati-gentry status, but after he moved to Shanghai as a professional painter about 1913, he had to live on the money he made selling his paintings and to chart a career for which there was no prototype. As a professional painter, he had to satisfy the tastes of new patrons in a rapidly modernizing society. In Shanghai, the

new metropolis of China, it was the fast-rising merchants who were becoming the major patrons of art. To these new patrons, colorful, decorative subjects such as flowers-and-birds were more attractive and more usable markers of status than the landscape painting which had been favored by scholar-officials for centuries (see fig. 1).

By 1911 Wu had established his unique style of *shiguwen* calligraphy (see cat. 56) and had achieved an equal mastery of calligraphy and painting. Among his favorite subjects were flowers and rocks, which probably reflect what patrons of the time wanted (see fig. 2). Finding that painting paid better than seal carving or calligraphy, he jokingly referred to it as something that he only did for "[a bowl of] rice with meat."⁶

Four Seasons (cats. 23a–23d), a set of four hanging scrolls painted in 1911, when he was sixty-seven, is representative of his art of that period. According to his inscription on the scroll of plum blossoms, the four seasonal flowers were done in the styles of the Qing individualists Li Shan (1686–1762), Shitao, and Zheng Xie (1693–1765), but the bolder brushwork, brighter color, and more superficial composition put the style of these paintings, as he himself wrote, somewhere "between resemblance and non-resemblance" to the essentials of those masters.⁷ His paintings generally are to be seen not as images from nature but as arrangements of flowers, plants, and rocks in an abstract space.

Later paintings show Wu emphasizing the epigraphical and calligraphic elements, making the pictures seem old-fashioned, awkward, and simply rendered. The heavy, emphatic ink lines and the strong color make a refreshing contrast to the timid good manners of most late Qing painting. Bravura brushwork and bold colors characterize *Wild Roses and Loquats* (cat. 24), which he painted in autumn of 1920. This painting pulsates with power and energy, although in his shaping of the rockery as a series of interlocking planes he has not yet achieved his greatest simplicity. Still, this work points toward the marvelously free and uninhibited personal statements that distinguish Wu's work from 1915 on.

Pomegranates and Plum Blossoms



Figure 2. Wu Changshi (1844–1927). Red Plum Blossom. 1916. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper. The Shanghai Museum.

(cat. 25), painted in 1912, is representative of his late work. Here, a purist taste is manifested in a further simplification of the composition (reducing the zigzag composition of *Wild Roses and Loquats* to three strong verticals placed at different heights so as to form a diagonal); in a stark contrast among pictorial elements; and in the attention to a pictorial axis, primarily to lend stability and also to coordinate the characteristic diagonal cross-movements. In a hanging scroll the pictorial axis tends to be vertical and sometimes can be supplied by integrating calligraphy into the composition (see fig. 3).

In 1909 Wu Changshi entered actively into the Shanghai art world. That year he became a founding member of the *Yuyuan shuhua shanhui* ("Yu Garden Charitable Association of Calligraphers and Painters"), whose dual goal was to serve artists' economic needs while also aiding victims of famines and floods.⁸ In 1913 he became the director of the *Xiling yinshe*, the first society of seal carvers, which had been founded in Hangzhou in 1904. After settling in Shanghai about 1913, Wu joined the *Haishang tijinguan jinshi shuhuahui*, a society of artists and seal carvers in Shanghai. Younger artists gravitated toward this sympathetic figure, and a number of them became his disciples. By the 1920s his students and friends had made Wu's work well known in Japan, especially among seal carvers and calligraphers.⁹

During the last stage of his career, with the foundations of traditional art under attack, challenged by Western culture and education and criticized by the Western-influenced New Culture Movement (*Xin wenhua yundong*), the continued practice of Chinese painting took on a larger communal or even national significance. At that time an intensified consciousness of the West marked all artistic pursuits in China, regardless of an artist's approach. The work of Wu Changshi, however, recalled the literati tradition, for he drew his strength from his epigraphical and calligraphic heritage and from the art of seal carving. The epigraphic quality in Wu's paintings could thus be considered a last effort to save the so-called tradition of literati painting. As a major mas-

ter of the time, Wu possessed a certainty regarding his own course that later artists could no longer muster.¹⁰ His career is representative of the artistic milieu of the important transitional period.

Wu Changshi's influence was great, and his pupils were many. They include some of the most renowned artists of the twentieth century: Wang Zhen (1867–1938), Chen Hengque (1876–1923), Wang Geyi (1897–1987), Qi Baishi (1864–1957), and Pan Tianshou (1898–1971), through whom his art and ideas were given new dimensions.

Wang Zhen (by-name Yiting) may be the most famous of Wu's disciples. He first studied under Ren Yi and later under Wu, combining the inspired calligraphic hand of the former and the solidity of the latter to form his own style. Born in Wuxing, Zhejiang Province, Wang was first employed as an apprentice in a picture-mounting shop. Later he studied foreign languages in the *Guang fangyan guan* (a foreign-language training and translation institute established by the Qing government), which helped him to become comprador for a Japanese trading company in China in 1900, and subsequently to hold a lucrative post at another major Japanese trading company from 1907 to 1931. He became a very successful businessman in Shanghai, eventually serving as chairman of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce. He was a generous supporter of Shanghai artists, and extremely active in Shanghai art circles. Like Wu Changshi, he was a founding member of the Yu Garden Charitable Association of Calligraphers and Painters in 1909, and was an important member of the Shanghai Tijinguan Epigraphy, Calligraphy, and Painting Society. As a painter, he was proficient at figures, flowers-and-birds (see cat. 26), landscapes, and animals, and particularly renowned for his Buddhist figures and his dragons (see cat. 28) and cranes (see fig. 4). His brushwork was fluent and calligraphic. In some of his works the influence of Ren Yi is paramount; in others, that of Wu Changshi, whose old age he cared for and whose burial he arranged. In the pair of paintings entitled *Fate* (cat. 26), dated to 1922, the figures are depicted with quick, free, spontaneous lines that are characteristic of Wang's figure style. The ple-



Figure 3. Wu Changshi (1844–1927). Ink Plum Blossom. 1927. Hanging scroll, ink on paper. Collection of Xiling Yinshe, Hangzhou.

beian subjects are not new; the theme of street characters portrayed without background or context is found in the works of the Qing period Yangzhou painters and most famously in an album by the Ming painter Zhou Chen. Similar subjects were painted by Wang Zhen's contemporaries, such as Chen Hengque's album *Beijing Customs*. But the admonishing inscriptions, by himself and Wu Changshi, show his Buddhist beliefs. Late in life Wang became a devout Buddhist and even served a term as the president of the Chinese Buddhist Association.¹¹ His enthusiasm for Chan painting, acquired during visits to Japan, shows in his many paintings of Bodhidharma and other Buddhist subjects (see fig. 5). In 1931 he headed (and very probably paid for) a party of more than twenty *guohua* artists, including Zhang Daqian, Wang Geyi, and Qian Shoutie (1896–1967), on a month-long tour of Japan.¹²

In the 1910s a group of painters mostly active in Suzhou, such as Lu Hui (1851–1920) and Gu Linshi (1865–1930), who advocated adherence to early models, held sway there as “revivalists,” although they kept up very close relationships with Shanghai painters, especially the circle of Wu Changshi. Lu, a native of Wujiang, Jiangsu Province, was known for his calligraphy, painting, and connoisseurship. He started his career as a flower-and-bird painter, learning from a local master, Liu Deliu (1806–1875 or 1805–1876).¹³ A twelve-leaf album of miscellaneous subjects from 1891 (cat. 17) is unquestionably one of Lu Hui's major early works, painted when he was forty. The flowers, fruit, fish, and animals have a rich, substantial appearance, with the elegance and refinement of Yun Shouping, and the dragging and halting brush movement characteristic of Hua Yan.¹⁴ In this album, to create variety, he broadened and expanded the range of subject matter. In the 1890s Lu Hui started to study landscape painting with another Wujiang compatriot, Tao Tao, whose landscapes were known for bold and vigorous brushwork and compelling composition.¹⁵

Lu's talent, however, was not recognized until he met Wu Dacheng in Shanghai. Wu was a rising political figure at the time, in addition to being a scholar,

collector, calligrapher, and amateur painter.¹⁶ The two men campaigned together during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895—a campaign that introduced Lu to the scenery of north China. When Wu was promoted, Lu became acquainted with some prominent officials and patrons of the time, such as Weng Tonghe (1830–1904)¹⁷ and Zhang Zhidong (1837–1909)¹⁸. In 1896, recommended by Zhang Zhidong, Lu headed a team of painters in the court-sponsored project of illustrating Wang Yun's *Chenghua shilue*, a Yuan dynasty text dealing with princely education. With free access to Wu Dacheng's own collection, and enabled by Wu's prestige and contacts to view other collections in the Jiangnan region, Lu gained firsthand knowledge of old paintings. This exposure sharpened his eyes and gave him confidence in his connoisseurship. Well-known collectors such as Sheng Xuanhuai (1849–1916) and Pang Yuanji (1864–1949) requested his advice and counsel; with the latter he kept up a close relationship that lasted almost twenty years and included giving lessons in painting technique.¹⁹

Liberal exposure to major works of ancient times, such as those of Dong Yuan (ca. 900–962), Mi Fu (1052–1107), Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322), Huang Gongwang (1269–1354), Wang Meng (1308–1385), and Ni Zan (1306[?]-1374), also affected Lu's own painting. He also appreciated the style of the orthodox masters of early Qing, particularly the work of Wang Yuanqi (1642–1715). In landscape painting, Lu preferred ample and detailed compositions. A landscape in the hanging-scroll format (cat. 18), painted in 1911, when he was sixty-one, is one of the best examples of his mature period. Its robust brushwork and powerful composition show Lu Hui's mastery of ancient masters' techniques. More than the other “revivalists,” Lu Hui gained a reputation in Shanghai and Suzhou as a classic literati artist. He also made painting theory a prime topic of his inscriptions on paintings.

Another revivalist and a fellow townsman of Lu Hui, Gu Yun (1835–1896), enjoyed equal popularity at the time in Suzhou and Shanghai. He was also a close friend of Wu Dacheng and an important member of the *Yiyuan huaji*, a painting society organized by Wu and Gu Linshi at



Figure 4. Wang Zhen (1867–1938). Crane. 1933. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper. Collection of Duoyunxuan, Shanghai.

Gu's Yi Garden in 1891. In 1888 Gu Yun traveled to Japan. While in Nagoya, he was invited to teach ink painting, and later some of his works were published as a painting manual for Japanese literati painting. He specialized in landscapes in the style of the early Qing orthodox masters. A representative example of his early work is *Landscape in the Style of Wang Meng* (cat. 19), which he painted in 1857, when he was only twenty-three. According to Gu's inscription, it is a copy of a Wang Meng landscape entitled *A Gathering by the Grove and Waterfall*, dated to 1367. Like numerous paintings "after Wang Meng" by later artists, Gu emphasized textural variety and dynamic composition, while retaining the Yuan master's sense of monumentality. The combination of rich brushwork, undulating contours, grand scale, and complexity are all closely based on earlier prototypes in the Wang Meng tradition.

Gu Linshi (by-name Heyi), a native of Suzhou, chose the same path but had even easier access than Lu Hui to early masterpieces. The Yuan, Ming, and Qing paintings owned by his grandfather Gu Wenbin (1811–1889) formed one of the most important collections in Suzhou at the time. The young Gu Linshi often studied these masterpieces in his grandfather's studio, Guoyunlou ("Tower of Passing Clouds"). Gu inherited the collection and created a beautiful garden, Yiyuan, which was celebrated for its arrangement of fantastic rocks and as a gathering place for his friends,²⁰ including such famous artists, scholars, and collectors as Wu Dacheng, Lu Hui, Yang Borun, Ni Tian (1855–1919), Wu Guxiang (1848–1908), Gu Yun, Yang Yan, and Wu Changshi. Gu Linshi excelled at landscape painting, in which he followed the styles of the ancient masters, especially the Yuan and Ming literati landscapists, but differed from them particularly in the organization of space. A hanging scroll of 1910, *Landscape After Xu Ben* (cat. 20), is a good example from his mature period. Xu Ben (by-name Youwen; 1335–1380) was a government official and scholar-painter of the early Ming. He was famous as a landscape painter in the styles of Dong Yuan (ca. 900–962) and Juran (act. ca. 960–985) of the Five Dynasties, and enjoyed equal popularity with one of his contempo-

raries, the bamboo painter Wang Fu (1362–1416).²¹ Xu Ben died a political prisoner, and few of his paintings survive. *Landscape After Xu Ben* is inscribed with colophons by Wu Changshi, Lu Hui, and Jin Erzhen (sobriquet Su'an; 1840–1917), all added the year it was painted, and one by Wu Dacheng's grandson, Wu Hufan, from 1950. In its soft, loose texture strokes and subtle ink tones Gu's painting is very similar to Xu Ben's *Autumn Grove and Thatched Pavilion*, but its dense composition is more dramatic, with diagonals zigzagging into the distance, interrupted by vertical trees. Prolonged study of such works from his grandfather's extensive collection enabled Gu Linshi to master the various styles of early masters, as Lu Hui explained in his colophon, but many of Gu's paintings seem conventional and unimaginative. In this work, however, his brushwork is extremely subtle and beautiful.

The "revival" of the literati tradition among this group of artists did not greatly influence the later development of Chinese painting. After the founding of the new Republic in 1911, a growing movement for social and intellectual reform was led by students returning from abroad and by the new intelligentsia emerging from China's Western-style educational system. In the decade of the 1910s these new intellectuals initiated a flurry of social and political activities, under such rubrics as the "new thought tide," the literary revolution, and the anti-Japanese boycott (to thwart Japanese encroachments in Shandong).

In all these movements the new intellectuals marshalled Western ideas in a "total" attack on Chinese cultural tradition, which they felt was an absolute obstacle to China's modernization.²² As intellectual historian Hao Chang has noted, "The scope of their moral iconoclasm is perhaps unique in the modern world; no other historical civilization outside the West undergoing modern transformation has witnessed such a phoenix-like impulse to see its own cultural tradition so completely negated."²³ To achieve modernization, the new intellectuals believed, China must be Westernized, and the old ideas, ethics, and culture from its feudal past must be replaced in toto with the new ideas,



Figure 5. Wang Zhen (1867–1938). A Conversation Under Old Pine Trees. 1920. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper. Private collection.

ethics, and culture of Western democracies. One of these new intellectuals, Chen Duxiu, wrote, "To build a Westernized new country and a Westernized new society so that we can survive in this competitive world, we must solve the basic problem of importing from the West the very foundation of the new society. . . . We must get rid of the old to achieve the new."²⁴ He also declared, "If you want to reform Chinese painting, you should revolutionize the Four Wangs' paintings first, and . . . apply the realism of Western art to reform Chinese painting."²⁵

Amid this great upheaval in cultural values, the Western-influenced aesthetic views of Cai Yuanpei (1867–1940) played a very important role in the early development of modern Chinese art. Cai Yuanpei, a classically educated scholar who had imbibed Western ideas as a student in Germany and France, and who had served the Republic as Minister of Education and (from 1917) as chancellor of Peking National University, ranked aesthetic education equally with universal military education, practical education, moral education, and "education for a world view" (i.e., a cosmopolitan understanding of the world and China's place in it). He was convinced that art as traditionally defined in China—a kind of ink-play for literati self-expression—could not fulfill the needs of modern society in general and of modern artists in particular. In his article "Replacing Religion with Aesthetic Education," he stated that "the art educator should apply the theory of aesthetics in education, with molding a person's emotions as aims."²⁶ He believed that art should become an important force in the creation of an ideal society.²⁷ This attitude inspired Chinese artists with a sense of mission and social responsibility in the years to come. With the rise of the New Culture Movement, which reached its peak in the May Fourth Movement of 1919, and with the influential Cai Yuanpei as its eloquent champion, art education began to flourish in the second decade of this century.

In diametric contrast to the Westernizers of the New Culture Movement, the National Essence school (*Guocui pai*), another very important ideological movement active since the early 1900s, urged the revitalization of native culture.

National Essence ideology, however, was already acquiring a conservative aura when the first rumblings of the New Culture Movement were felt in 1915. After the 1911 revolution National Essence advocates were still part of the larger movement for cultural change; but with the founding of the radical journal *Xinqingnian* ("New Youth") in 1915, advocates of cultural revolution forced them into defensive and untenable positions. Although the National Essence group did not deeply involve itself in arguments about art in the 1910s, its attitudes toward the Chinese cultural heritage significantly influenced thought in the art circles of the 1920s and 1930s.

Since the beginning of this century voices for reform were heard among the loyalists of traditional painting. Simultaneously with the importation of Western goods and culture, rich merchants displaced the scholar-gentry from the pinnacle of the social structure. In tandem with this social upheaval and also in consequence of it, popular art challenged orthodox literati painting as a badge of the elite. The emergence of the Shanghai school in the late nineteenth century reflected the general mood of society. Some of its painters tried to inject a fresh spirit into traditional literati painting by expanding its subject matter and absorbing popular tastes, such as bright colors and novel compositions, but they only hastened the decline of traditional painting into vulgar superficiality.²⁸ Almost all artists of the time were conscious of the necessity of reforming traditional painting.

In the art world, the major concerns were: how should the thousand-year-old heritage of traditional Chinese painting be evaluated in the light of Western art's powerful new influence? how might traditional Chinese painting best respond to modernity? should Chinese artists participate in a "total" attack on tradition and adopt "wholesale Westernization," or instead entrench themselves in tradition to resist any Western influence? what kind of reform of traditional painting, if any, should Chinese artists attempt? In answering these questions, the art world was basically divided into two camps, the Reformists and the National Essence advocates.



Figure 6. Jin Cheng (1877–1926). Landscape. 1918. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper. Private collection.

The Reformists, most of whom had received Western training in Europe or Japan and were impressed by the realistic, or naturalistic appearance of objects in Western art, believed that the reform of traditional Chinese painting required assimilation of the methods of Western art. On returning to China, many of them were given important positions in the new system of art education based on French models.

The name most closely associated today with the project of making a self-consciously “new” Chinese art by blending East and West is that of Xu Beihong (1895–1953). Xu was the first government-sponsored Chinese student to go to Europe to study art, which he did in Paris and Berlin from 1919 to 1925. The prestige accruing from this, coupled with his own artistic and self-promotional skills, made him very prominent in certain artistic circles. After returning to China, he was appointed director of the National Beiping Academy of Fine Arts by Cai Yuanpei, who was then Minister of Education. Later he was a teacher and administrator at several schools and universities. Xu strongly criticized traditional Chinese painters for their slavish imitation of ancient masters and advocated Western naturalistic techniques, urging Chinese artists to “adopt the materials and techniques²⁹ invented to depict real objects.”³⁰

In the 1920s and early 1930s he became an extreme proponent of Western representational techniques in Chinese art. He even took up history painting—the heart of the French academic tradition in which he had been trained (a tradition effectively moribund in France itself by the time he studied there).³¹ His huge oil paintings were never really successful, either conceptually or technically, but his ink paintings of horses, in which he attempted to adapt the Western use of light and shading to the traditional Chinese medium (see cat. 47), won him a great reputation both in China and abroad.

Gao Jianfu (1879–1951), the leader of the Lingnan school, founded in the 1910s, was also of the Reformist camp. His seminal article “My View on Modern Chinese Painting” urged an eclectic approach—a purposeful combining of the Chinese

literati tradition and the Western academic tradition—to the reform of traditional Chinese painting.³² A like idea had been propounded by one of the earliest visionaries of wide-ranging reform, Zhang Zhidong (1837–1909): “[draw] utilitarianism (*yong*) from the West and [retain] the essence (*li*) of Chinese culture.”³³ Zhang believed that Chinese artists should avail themselves of all good concepts and methods, Western or Asian, ancient or modern, applying them eclectically and creatively to create a new Chinese painting for a modern China.³⁴

Other important Reformists included Lin Fengmian (1900–1991), who studied in Paris and was interested in Post-Impressionism; Wang Yachen (1894–1983), who discovered Impressionist-style painting when he was in Tokyo; and Liu Haisu (1896–1994), an admirer of Cézanne and Van Gogh. All three traveled in Europe for several years, and all became directors of art academies or chairmen of university art departments after they returned to China, thus exerting considerable influence nationwide.

Cheng Zhang (1869–1938), a native of Xiuning, Anhui Province, but mostly active in Shanghai, was definitely not an advocate of a new, eclectically derived Chinese painting, nor as conspicuous a Reformist as the artists mentioned above. But he followed these contemporaries in adapting Western perspective and use of rational light-and-shade to traditional Chinese painting. He was primarily a teacher of biology, first at Suzhou Caoqiao Middle School, then at Shanghai Chinese Academy, finally as a professor at Qinghua (Tsinghua) University. Thus, he was basically an amateur painter.

Cheng’s early flower-and-bird paintings are meticulous works in the *mogu* (“boneless”) style. The dynamic brushwork, bold color, and strongly contrasting tones of ink in his 1926 hanging scroll *Cranes* (cat. 29) show the clear influence of Shanghai painters Ren Yi and Wang Zhen. In his middle years he began using Western techniques of perspective and shading in his paintings, and was especially good at painting from nature, an ability perhaps due in part to his training in biology. In *Rustic Scene* (cat. 30), a hanging scroll of 1930, he depicted a scene of daily life in the countryside, a subject



Figure 7. Zheng Yong (1894–1952). Landscape, 1944. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper. Private collection.

uncommon in painting of that period. The brushwork in this painting seems not very different from that of his Shanghai contemporaries, but the light and shadow on the architecture and foreground lends a three-dimensional effect, which recalls Lingnan school paintings.

Like Cheng Zhang, Tianjin painter Liu Kuiling (1885–1967) did not propound theories but absorbed the methods of Western painting into his Chinese practice. From childhood, he had loved painting, and for the most part he taught himself to paint by copying from manuals of earlier painting. At the age of thirty Liu became a professional painter. He gained a reputation for flowers, animals, and insects in a style strongly influenced by Lang Shining (the Jesuit priest-painter Giuseppe Castiglione; 1688–1766), active at the Qing court 1715–1766, who mingled Western concepts of scale, space, light-and-shadow, and shading with Chinese subject matter, mediums, and landscape conventions. The elegant color and meticulous details of Liu's *Rooster and Hens* (cat. 43), dated to 1933, are typical of his style.

With traditional art and its cultural foundations under attack, the adoption of a traditional painting manner was no longer automatic and involuntary but a matter of deliberate choice. Many painters who made that choice were nevertheless aware of the larger, more cosmopolitan world and the necessity of modernizing Chinese art. They insisted, though, that modernization must be based on Chinese art's own history, standards, and internal dynamics. The entity to be modernized was an unmistakably traditional kind of Chinese painting and the direction of its modernization was likewise to be wholly Chinese. Representative artists of this traditionalist group—the National Essence school—included Jin Cheng (1877–1926), Chen Hengque (1876–1923), Huang Binhong (1864–1955), Hu Peiheng (1891–1962), He Tianjian (1891–1977), and Zheng Yong (Wuchang; 1894–1952).

Jin Cheng was born in Beijing. He studied law in London for several years and then went to France and the United States to study legal systems and art. After the Chinese republic was established in 1911, he was appointed Secretary

of State Affairs,³⁵ and was charged with establishing the first gallery to exhibit the cultural relics that had been collected by the imperial family. In 1920 Jin, along with others, established in Beijing the Society for the Study of Chinese Painting (*Zhongguo huaxue yanjiuhui*), which attracted many young students. From that forum, he vigorously advocated constant studying and copying of the Tang and Song masters as the basic approach to rejuvenating the outworn orthodoxy of late Qing painting, and the perpetuation of literati painting through mastery of the “three supremacies” of poetry, painting, and calligraphy. Jin regarded the defense of traditional Chinese painting as an ineluctable responsibility. In most of his works he imitated the paintings of ancient masters (see fig. 6). His political, social, and artistic eminence gave Jin great influence over other traditional painters, and his point of view worked to counteract “wholesale Westernization.”

Chen Hengque, a native of Yining, Jiangxi Province, who was born into a scholarly family, became an accomplished scholar himself, and excelled at poetry, calligraphy, painting, and seal carving. He began to study painting at the age of six, and received his general education at the South China Technical School in Nanjing, graduating in 1898. Beginning in 1902 he spent seven years in Japan, where he studied Western art and had the opportunity to see works by the Qing Individualists Zhu Da and Shitao, which inspired him to break free from Qing academicism. On returning to China, Chen taught Chinese painting in several schools, including Peking National Normal College and Peking Girls' Normal School.³⁶ When the Institute for Research on Chinese Painting Practice (*Beijing daxue huafa yanjiusuo*) was established by Cai Yuanpei at Peking University in 1918, Chen was appointed teacher of Chinese painting. In his notable article “The Value of Literati Painting,” published in 1921, he urged his fellow artists to make paintings that would express both *joie de vivre* and literati sentiment, which would elevate people's sentiments and develop their taste for literati painting.³⁷ He did not oppose the application of Western methods, but he believed that “painting should be based on the structure of tradi-



Figure 8. He Tianjian (1891–1977).
Scenery of Mt. Yandang, 1941.
Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper.
Private collection.

tional Chinese painting, but then [we should] over[come] our own shortcomings by learning from others' strong points."³⁸ According to Chen, "Western painting stressed form-likeness (*xingsi*), especially since the nineteenth century, by using . . . scientific techniques to study . . . light and color. . . . But recently, the Post-Impressionists have done diametrically opposite. They attach importance not to objects but to subjective thinking."³⁹ Chen considered this subjective approach in modern Western art in certain ways similar to the subjective, expressive intention of Chinese literati painting. Although he was trained in Western art in Japan, his own painting, vigorous, free, and spontaneous, was fundamentally Chinese but with some of the simple, naïve quality of Japanese Zen art. His *Album of Miscellaneous Paintings in an Elongated Format* (cat. 31), painted in 1922, a year before his premature death, features the typical elements of his style—free, forceful brushwork, strong, bright color, simple compositions, and a naïve aspect—which are also characteristic of Zhu Da, Shitao, and Wu Changshi. The inscriptions on the paintings reveal literary talent as well.

Some traditionalist artists, instead of challenging the Reformists by creatively transforming the traditional literati style, attempted to arouse popular support for traditional Chinese painting by promoting and popularizing the idea of National Essence in the mass media.⁴⁰ To accomplish this, they used modern organizational structures—exhibitions, public relations, advertising, sales, and periodical distribution networks. A group of artists in Shanghai, including many disciples and followers of Wu Changshi—such as Ye Gongchuo (1881–1965), Zheng Yong, He Tianjian, Qian Shoutie, Huang Binhong, Zhang Yuguang (1885–1966), and Sun Xueni (1889–1965)—established the Chinese Painting Society in 1931 to promote traditional Chinese painting, raise international esteem for Chinese art, and prevent Western cultural domination. In the first issue of their journal, called *Guohua yuekan* ("Chinese Painting Monthly"), the editor stated that one of the duties of the journal was to popularize ancient and modern masterpieces to the public.⁴¹ These artists con-

centrated on the study of works by early masters and on early writings about painting.

Zheng Yong began painting at the age of seven. He was an enthusiastic advocate of traditional Chinese painting. During the 1930s, as art director of Zhonghua Publishing Company, he became acquainted with many artists, including Zhang Daqian (1899–1983) and He Tianjian. He taught painting in several art schools and was also active in many of the art circles of Shanghai. Besides the Chinese Painting Society, he was a founding member of the Bee Painting Society and the Nine Artists Society. In addition to many articles for the Chinese Painting Society's journal, *Guohua yuekan*,⁴² he wrote a number of books which contributed significantly to the formative period of Chinese art-historical study, including *The History of Chinese Art*, *The History of Chinese Mural Painting*, and most important, *The General History of Chinese Painting Theory*, which was published in Shanghai in 1929. With a solid background in Song and Yuan painting, Zheng was well known for peaceful, lyrical landscapes in various styles (see fig. 7). He occasionally painted figures and flowers as well. Perhaps because writing, teaching, and organizational work took up his time, there are few early works. *Viewing the Waterfall* (cat. 53), painted in 1948, may be one of his best landscapes. The powerful composition, with its central peak, zigzagging waterfall, and dragon-shaped trees; the complicated brush strokes combined with various kinds of dots and tones of washes; and the emphatically varied ink tones all reflect his effort to purge the insipidity which he believed had enfeebled painting since the late Qing, and to recapture the monumentality of Song and Yuan landscapes.

Another founding member of the Chinese Painting Society, He Tianjian, a native of Wuxi, Jiangsu, is relatively unknown. Self-taught, he made a living during the 1920s and 1930s as a professional painter and teacher at several art schools in Shanghai and its environs. He also served as editor-in-chief of the painting society's journal, *Guohua yuekan*, beginning with its fourth issue. He was simultaneously very active in tra-



Figure 9. Huang Binhong (1864–1955). Mt. Huang. 1931. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper. The Shanghai Museum.

ditionalist theoretical circles. In 1920 he and Hu Dinglu (1883–1943) founded the Mount Xi Calligraphy and Painting Society in their native Wuxi, and extended membership to painters active in Shanghai, such as Zhang Daqian, Wu Hufan, and Xie Gongzhan (1885–1940). As editor, he published strongly traditionalist articles in *Guohua yuekan*, and also publicized his opinions in the pages of the popular magazine *Meishu shenghuo* ("Art and Life"). His first solo exhibition was held in Shanghai in 1936. He excelled at landscapes in the "blue-and-green" manner of rich mineral hues applied within precise outlines—a manner originating during the Tang dynasty (618–906) and afterward employed to connote antiquity. As a painter, he was considered one of the traditionalists. Withal, as *Conversation in the Autumn Woods* (cat. 43), a hanging scroll of 1939, makes clear, his compositions display a certain boldness and daring, and his landscapes are constructed in ways that most orthodox painters would never have attempted. Like Zheng Yong, he emulated the monumental style of Song and Yuan landscapes. *Conversation in the Autumn Woods* recalls Northern Song compositions by the strong, thrusting vertical of its central, dominating mountain, but the twisted texture strokes applied to the mountain's surface create a disquieting sense of unrest. As unifying devices, he has used pine tree and grass motifs, with small brush marks that follow a curving path up, around, and through the entire composition. A considerable degree of abstraction and the purposeful tension of contrasting directional flows and compositional movements (see fig. 8) make his work peculiarly modern.

Huang Binhong was likewise a founding member of the Chinese Painting Society and a very important figure in the art world of the early Republican period. Descended of a prominent literati family, Huang was a scholar, poet, calligrapher, painter, and connoisseur; a man totally dedicated to literary and artistic pursuits. He edited several of the most important Chinese art publications of the twentieth century, including *Shenzhou guoguang ji* (1908–1918), *Yiguan* (1926–1928), *Guohua yuekan* (1934–1935), and *Meishu shenghuo* (1934–1937), and he wrote the most extensive art treatises in modern

China. In 1907, when he was forty-four, two leading scholars of the National Essence movement, Huang Jie and Deng Shi, invited him to Shanghai to assist in the editing of *Guocui xuebao* ("National Essence") and several other important publications. Huang felt that "if Chinese scholars do not reexamine themselves but only worry about others' strong points, they will limit their own progress; if they do not study their own tradition earnestly, they will not maintain the honor of their tradition."¹³ Huang regarded studying the National Essence and popularizing traditional Chinese culture as his absolute duty.¹⁴ With those goals in mind, Huang and others began publication of *Shenzhou guoguang ji*, adding *Meishu congshu* ("Art Treatise Series") soon after. *Shenzhou guoguang ji* was the first major publication in China to reproduce Chinese paintings and calligraphy for a general readership. *Meishu congshu*, in 120 volumes, was a compilation of all the known treatises on the various arts, culled from traditional Chinese sources; it proved to be the most complete set of traditional writings on art in modern China. Huang also published his own research on art in a book entitled *Gu hua wei* ("On Early Painting") in 1925.

Huang was also a founder or important member of several other art societies in Shanghai, whose aim was "to preserve the national essence and promote art."¹⁵ Many other famous artists and connoisseurs of the time, including Wang Zhen (Yiting), Wu Daiqiu, Zhang Yishan, Zhang Boying, Chen Hongfu, and Gu Qingyao, were members of these groups.

In addition to his scholarly and organizational work, Huang was also one of the greatest landscape painters of the first half of the century in China. While studying the landscape painting of past masters, particularly the work of Kuncan (1612–1673), Huang also traveled extensively and enjoyed sketching the scenery of China's great mountains, especially Mt. Huang in Anhui Province (fig. 9). His landscapes drew on both his understanding of painting and his direct experience of nature. The works by Huang in the current exhibition demonstrate his typical approaches to painting. The works of his middle age are characterized by a labored, almost compulsive building of

forms and textures through successive layers of overlapping brushwork, which can be seen in a pair of landscapes painted in 1922 in the narrow *qintiao* format (see cat. 40). In his later years his brushwork became much freer and more personal, as he moved beyond faithful emulation of the old masters. In a landscape painted in 1952 (cat. 54), he broke up traditional strokes and reconstituted them into new, totally unexpected forms. He seems to have visualized the overall composition in advance, so that the execution, which is accomplished by loose sketchy brushwork, is almost an afterthought. Indeed, some of his works approach total abstraction.⁴⁶

The professional artists who were most successful at finding a public during the Republican decades were probably those who kept to what were then perceived as "traditional" styles and subjects. These were not necessarily unthinkingly conservative. The leading traditionalist in Shanghai during the 1930s and 1940s was Wu Hufan (1894–1968). Wu came from a prominent literati family in Suzhou—his grandfather was Wu Dacheng (1835–1902), a famous scholar-official, collector, and connoisseur—and he received first-rate training in art. With access to his family's and other Suzhou collections, Wu followed the path of a traditional literati painter, showing versatility by imitating the various styles of many old masters. At the same time, however, he achieved the traditional ideal of painting excellence—transformation of the revered models into original works bearing the stamp of his own mind—producing some of the most exquisite traditional works in the modern period. Wu's landscapes were much inspired by the styles of the Four Wangs of the early Qing period as well as those of Dong Yuan and Juran of the tenth century, and Guo Xi of the eleventh. His *Meiyang Studio* (cat. 41) of 1929, and *Lofty Scholars in an Autumn Grove* (cat. 42), a hanging scroll painted in 1943, are exquisite examples of works in the style of the Ming master Tang Yin (1470–1523). *Meiyang Studio* offers his favorite subject, mist- and cloud-enshrouded mountains, executed with elegant and refined brushwork. It is not a copy of a specific work but an evocation of Tang Yin's style.

Lofty Scholars in an Autumn Grove derives its charm from a combination of formal handling of brush and ink with specificity of season and locale. Extremely proficient in brushwork and familiar with the major traditions, Wu Hufan, together with Wu Zheng (1878–1949), Wu Zishen (1894–1972), and Feng Chaoran (1882–1954), composed the group of leading and influential conservative landscape painters of the Shanghai and Suzhou area. Like his grandfather, Wu Hufan was a great collector and connoisseur, perhaps even better known for his collecting than for his painting.

Among the painters who worked in northern China during the modern period there were also traditionalists. The professional painter Qi Baishi (1864–1957) is one of the best known. Qi was a native of Xiangtan, Hunan Province, but his artistic career developed mostly in Beijing. Of peasant origin, he began his artistic career as a craftsman, only later acquiring formal training in painting, calligraphy, and seal carving. While earning his living from painting and seal carving in Beijing, he got to know Chen Hengque; inspired by Chen, his painting style underwent significant changes. In 1927, at Lin Fengmian's invitation, he joined the faculty of a new school, the National Beiping Academy of Art, to teach Chinese painting. At the time, he was the oldest professor there. Unlike most painters of that period, Qi abjured professional debates and membership in all art societies, and became a great master by pursuing his painting career in solitude. He became known for his paintings of shrimp, fish, crabs, birds, flowers, and human figures. His rare landscapes are among his most innovative works. Perhaps he painted relatively few landscapes because he remembered the old cautionary saying of Yangzhou artists, "If you want gold, paint figures. If you want silver, paint flowers. If you want beggary, paint landscapes."⁴⁷ One of his relatively few surviving landscapes is a hanging-scroll painting dated to 1924 (cat. 32), a simple composition with free, bold brushwork. Qi retains the expressive brushwork of late nineteenth-century painting, adding to it a compositional daring that is at once more primitive and more modern. *Lotus Pond* (cat. 33), paint-

ed the same year, shows that his style of flower painting at that time still owed much to Zhu Da, Shitao, and Wu Changshi, but the directness and almost childlike naturalness in his work are his own. This personal quality is credited to his humble beginnings. Like many Chinese painters, he often rendered the same subjects over and over again; in so doing, he achieved a distinctive style, capturing their vital essence.⁴⁶ As a major master, he influenced many younger painters, including Li Kuchan (1898–1983) and Cui Zifan (b. 1915).

Among China's greatest modern innovators, Pan Tianshou (1898–1971) stands with Qi Baishi as an antidote to overrefinement. An artist who reached his creative height after 1949, Pan is therefore not well known outside China. Born in Ninghai, Zhejiang Province, he received his first art training under a famous scholar, Li Shutong, at the Zhejiang First Normal School in Hangzhou, and then taught from 1923 to 1928 in Shanghai. Apart from a short visit to Japan in 1929, he spent his life as an art teacher at various art schools, especially the National Hangzhou Academy. In 1932 he, with others, founded the Baishe Painting Society and published its journal, *Baishe Pictorial*. He was also one of the organizers of the 1937 National Art Exhibition in Nanjing. During World War II he accompanied the Hangzhou Academy in its wanderings throughout western China. After 1949 he continued to teach in Hangzhou, and was appointed president of the Academy in 1958. Pan painted flowers, birds, fish, and human figures, as well as landscapes, and like Qi Baishi, his style is characterized by clearly articulated forms and bold, energetic lines influenced by the works of Zhu Da, Wu Changshi, and Huang Binhong. *Black Chicken* (cat. 52), painted in 1948, is considered his first painting to demonstrate his unique personal style, which he pursued and developed for the rest of his life. The modernity of his painting, as evidenced by this work, stems from his overriding concern with the formal organization of the pictorial surface and his correspondingly minimal interest in subject matter. His simple use of color reinforces these formalist qualities. His forceful brush and daring composition impart a

freshness and graphic power that helped Chinese painting truly enter the twentieth century. During the Cultural Revolution, when his paintings were criticized for being too abstract and too individualistic, Pan was severely persecuted.

Several other important painters from the first half of this century seem difficult to classify, but their unique individual styles and their influence on the development of Chinese art of this century secure them a place in the history of twentieth-century Chinese art. Zhang Daqian (given name Yuan; 1899–1983) was one of the most important of these. A native of Neijiang, Sichuan Province, Zhang became interested in painting at an early age under the influence of his family. At nineteen he was sent to join his elder brother Zhang Shanzi, a well-known tiger painter, in Tokyo. After two years of studying painting, textile weaving, and dyeing, in 1919 he returned to Shanghai to study painting and calligraphy with Zeng Xi (1861–1930) and Li Ruiqing (1876–1920; Li established the first academic painting department in China, at the Liangjiang Normal School in Nanjing).⁴⁷ During this period Zhang lived briefly as a monk, adopting the Buddhist name Daqian. The 1920s and 1930s saw him mainly in Shanghai and Suzhou, but he traveled extensively in China as well. In Suzhou he and his brother lived in a villa with a famous garden, the Wangshiyuan, once the home of the Qing official Song Zongyuan. He was appointed an executive committee member for the first national art exhibition in China, organized by the Ministry of Education in 1929, and in 1933 he was invited by Xu Beihong to teach for a year at the National Central University in Nanjing. During World War II he spent nearly three years in Dunhuang, copying and studying the Buddhist murals there, which established his reputation as a scholarly artist. He left China for Hong Kong in 1949, and since then has lived in many countries, including Brazil and the United States. Living abroad, he continued to paint in the traditional manner but gradually moved toward abstraction by using splash techniques.⁴⁸ Despite his reputation among traditional connoisseurs as a forger, Zhang's knowledge of tradition and his phenomenal painting skills established his position as a master

of Chinese painting. He excelled in human figures, flowers-and-birds, landscapes, and almost any subject he attempted. *Self-Pity* (cat. 44), painted in 1934, features one of his typical subjects of that period; the brushwork is elegant and refined, but the painting is immature. *Red Lotus* of 1947 (cat. 45), perhaps one of his greatest flower paintings, shows his complete mastery of traditional skills. It is extremely colorful and decorative, with the red blossoms and green leaves outlined with fine, firm gold lines, giving the painting somewhat the effect of modern Japanese painting (*Nihonga*). Zhang did not establish his own unique style until the 1960s and 1970s.

In the early decades of the twentieth century Japanese training was instrumental in the development of new schools of Chinese painting. Artists such as Xu Beihong and Liu Haisu studied Western art in Tokyo and subsequently taught oil painting in China, while painters of the Cantonese school learned ways of modernizing traditional techniques from the *Nihonga* style. Two other artists who received artistic training in Japan and developed their own personal styles after returning to China were Fu Baoshi (1904–1965) and Feng Zikai (1898–1975).

Fu Baoshi acquired enormous influence and a unique place in modern Chinese painting. He was born into a poor family in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province. At age ten he was put to work in a ceramics shop, but he used his spare time to learn calligraphy, seal carving, and painting. In 1933, with the help of Xu Beihong, he went to the Tokyo School of Fine Arts to study art history and sculpture. There he translated works by Japanese art historians such as Kanehara Shōjō and Umezawa Waken. As a painter, he absorbed the pervasive influence of the famous *Nihonga* painters Takenuchi Seihō, Yokoyama Taikan, and Kosugi Hōan.⁷ In 1934 Fu held a solo exhibition in Tokyo—a great accolade for one still a student. After he returned to China, he spent the rest of his life as a painter, historian of Chinese painting, and teacher at the National Central University in Nanjing (which maintained its existence in Chongqing during the war years).

Primarily a figure painter, Fu also excelled at landscapes, although he did

not establish his own landscape style until the 1940s. The two landscapes included in the current exhibition are excellent examples of his unique style. *Shitao's Studio* (cat. 48), painted in 1945, offers a typical landscape dominated by towering mountains and huge trees that almost fill the picture space. It is formed not of strong calligraphic lines but rather of a profusion of superimposed light strokes, enriched into a complex texture of broken ink and soft color washes. Fu Baoshi was an ardent admirer of Shitao. He not only studied Shitao's painting style but also completed the first biographical chronicle of Shitao, which became one of the most important early resources for the study of that painter. He painted several versions of Shitao's studio, Dadicaotang ("Thatched Hall of Dadizi") during the 1940s. *Rain at Dusk* (cat. 49), another hanging scroll painted in 1945, is quite different in technique from any of Fu's earlier works. The free, dry, rapid lines which define the surface of the mountain, and the emphasis on watercolor effects have nothing to do with traditional brushwork. The monumental scale recalls the Northern Song masters. Here, however, the most important thing is that Fu's primary interest is not to convey the appearance of the landscape itself but rather the human response to landscape. All of his works are intended to evoke atmosphere and mood, an intention largely absent from Chinese painting since the end of the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279).⁸²

Feng Zikai, a native of Tongxiang, Zhejiang Province, was an influential writer, painter, and art educator. Like Pan Tianshou, Feng began his art education under Li Shutong, for whom he retained lifelong respect and friendship. After graduating Zhejiang First Normal School, he became a middle-school art teacher. In the spring of 1921 he went to Japan for about ten months to study art, though he did not enroll in a school. During the 1920s he started to draw comics, whose naïve style immediately attracted the attention of Zheng Zhenduo, a famous scholar, who edited the influential journal *Wenxue zhouban* ("Literary Weekly") in Shanghai. His comics, which began to appear in that journal in 1926, mostly represented daily

life among the common people and became very popular in Shanghai. In 1928 he began a lifelong series of albums, *Protecting Life*, dedicated to his teacher Li Shutong, who had become a Buddhist monk in 1918. The first volume of this series (cat. 51) is shown in the current exhibition. Every ten years (except during the Cultural Revolution [1966–1976]) Feng painted a new album under the same title. The themes of this series are basically precepts for lay Buddhists, advocating vegetarianism, kindness to animals, and other aspects of compassion. Until his death, Li Shutong inscribed the facing page of each painting in each volume. The style of these paintings is very naïve and appealing. The free, spontaneous brushwork and simple compositions recall the paintings of Wang Zhen and Chen Hengque, but also seem to reflect a taste for Japanese Zen paintings that Feng may have acquired in Japan or from his many Japan-oriented friends. His later paintings, such as *Gazing at the Lake* (cat. 50), painted in 1940, continue this naïve style. *Gazing at the Lake* is, in fact, remarkably reminiscent of Hiroshige's woodblock landscapes in composition and mood.

In the first half of the twentieth century China experienced cataclysmic political and social changes—the collapse of the Qing dynasty, the May Fourth Cultural Movement, the Sino-Japanese War, and constant civil war. The development of Chinese art reflects this complex and turbulent historical panorama. The diversity of modern Chinese painting is a manifestation of its particular time and place, given shape by the many external pressures brought to bear on traditional Chinese painting by political, economic, and cultural forces. Chinese painting was in a state of acute tension, pulled in opposite directions by its traditions and by the Western-influenced reform movement. The attack on Chinese painting by some intellectuals of the New Culture movement, the return of large numbers of painters from study overseas, the increasing accessibility of art training, the establishment of art institutions—all this generated debates over the merits and demerits of Chinese painting versus Western painting, and over the direction

traditional Chinese painting should take. These discussions were considered vital to the development of Chinese painting and enjoyed ever-widening participation. Partisans of the two polarized views drew up endless blueprints of their versions of Chinese painting and worked in many different ways to make each version a reality.⁵³ The complexity of the pursuits and the variety of practices in the field of traditional painting are difficult to classify into the somewhat simplistic categories of “reformist” or “conservative,” “traditionalist” or “innovative.” In this unique transitional era, we see the meeting of East and West, of ancient and modern. It was a time both bewildering and challenging; it was also exhilarating and rich in opportunities. Even the most experimental pursuits of recent decades still echo that manifold and exciting time.

NOTES

1. Arnold Chang and Brad Davis, “Introduction,” *The Mountain Retreat—Landscape in Modern Chinese Painting* (Aspen, Colo.: The Aspen Art Museum, 1986), p. 5.
2. The six chronicles of Wu Changshi's life (*nianpu*), in order of publication, are: Kenshin Shodo-kai, *Go Shoseki no subete* (Tokyo, 1979), pp. 222–24; Wu Changye, “Wu Changshi Xiansheng nianpu,” *Shupu*, vol. 59 (1984), pp. 22–32, and an abbreviated version of it in *Xiling yicong*, vol. 2 (July 1984), pp. 34–77; Wu Changshi *shuhua ji* (Taipei, 1985), pp. 10–13. English version, pp. 122–118; *Bunjinga suihen*, vol. 10 (Tokyo, 1986), pp. 156–58; Chen Siming, *Wu Changshi huahui hua*, pp. 195–236; Lin Shuzhong, *Wu Changshi nianpu* (Shanghai, 1994). In addition, Ding Xiyuan has compiled combined biographies of three artists, in Shanghai Meishuguan, *Xugu, Ren Bonian, Wu Changshi huaji* (Shanghai, n.d.). For biographical accounts, see Wu Dongmai, *Wu Changshi* (Shanghai, 1962), and Wang Jiacheng, “Wu Changshi zhuan,” *Gugong wenwu yuekan* (“The National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art”), published in 17 installments, July 1983–November 1984.
3. See Wu Dongmai, *Wu Changshi*, p. 4. Wu Dongmai blamed all the atrocities in the native village of Zhangwu on the Qing army, even though Wu Changshi attributed the massacre to the Taiping rebels. See *Foulu ji*, vol. 1, 1a–2a.
4. See Wu Dongmai, *Wu Changshi*, p. 8. The dating of this occurrence is still uncertain. Wu

- Dongmai places it in Wu Changshi's thirties, though it could have been in his forties, as Wang Jiacheng tends to argue; see his "Wu Changshi zhuan," *Gugong wenwu yuankan*, vol. 1, no. 8 (1983), p. 37; Zheng Yimei, however, places the event in Wu Changshi's fifties. See Ding Xiyuan, *Ren Bonian* (Shanghai, 1989), p. 103, citing his Xiao Yangchun. In another anecdote, cited in *Ren Bonian*, p. 81, when Hu Yuan observed that Wu Changshi started painting far too late, Ren Yi and Yang Xian both defended and encouraged him. Whether Ren Yi was Wu Changshi's teacher has become a matter of recent controversy. Gong Chanxing, "Ren Bonian yu Wu Changshi de youyi," *Duoyun* 1 (May 1981), pp. 195-98, started the dispute by suggesting that Ren indeed was Wu's teacher. Wu Minxian, a descendant of the master, countered that they were but friends who shared interests and perhaps occasional instruction; see *Meishu shilun* ("History and Theory of Fine Arts"), no. 2 (1986), pp. 68-69. Both Wang Geyi and Liu Haisu agreed with Wu Minxian in their respective accounts: "Wu Changshi xiansheng shishi kaoding," pp. 8-9, and *Huiyi Wu Changshi*, p. 223. Gong Chanxing reiterated his opinion that Ren had been Wu's teacher in "Shushi shufei," *Meishu shilun*, no. 3 (1988), pp. 108-9.
5. From his unsuccessful stint in the army to his resignation from the magistracy of Andong county in 1889, his experiences in political and official circles were entirely negative.
 6. Quoted in Wu Minxian, "Foulu shiyi," in *Huiyi Wu Changshi*, p. 35. Wu Minxian explains that in the nineteenth century calligraphers and seal carvers could afford only vegetarian meals, whereas painters were able to have meat.
 7. See Wu Changshi's inscription on pl. 23a.
 8. In 1919 Wang Zhen (1867-1938) and Wu Changshi cooperated on designs for a set of lithographs, *Liumin tu* ("The Homeless"), which were sold to raise funds for the victims of floods across Henan, Hubei, Anhui, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang. See Wang Senran, "Wu Changshi xiansheng pingzhuan," in his *Jindai ershijia pingzhuan*, reissued in *Jindai Zhongguo shiliao congkan*, pt. 90, vol. 900. See pp. 18-19 for a description of this set of paintings and the accompanying inscriptions.
 9. In 1979, Aoyama Sanyu published *Go Shoseki no ga to San* and *Go Shoseki no Subete*, the latter being the catalogue of an exhibition sponsored by the Kenshin Shodo-kai.
 10. Chou Ju-hsi and Claudia Brown, *Transcending Turmoil* (Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 1992), p. 272.
 11. See Yin-p'ing Hao, *Comprador in Nineteenth Century China: Bridge between East and West* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 182.
 12. See Wang Geyi, *Wang Geyi suxianglu* ("Recollections of Wang Geyi") (Shanghai, 1982), pp. 60-61.
 13. Yang Yi, *Haishang molin* (Shanghai, 1920), vol. 3, p. 66.
 14. Chou Ju-hsi and Claudia Brown, *Transcending Turmoil*, p. 216.
 15. Zhang Mingke, *Hansongge tanyi suolu*, vol. 3, p. 97.
 16. Wu Dacheng's biography is included in Arthur W. Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1943-1944), pp. 880-82. See also the explanatory text accompanying Lu Hui's painting in Shih Yun-wen, *Zhongguo jindai huihua: Qingmo bian* (Taipei, 1991), no. 60. The author suggests that Lu Hui met Wu Dacheng in Shanghai during the Tongzhi reign, probably about 1870-1874, when the artist reached adulthood.
 17. See Jin Liang, *Jinshu renwu zhi*, in *Jindai Zhongguo shiliao congkan*, p. 120, citing Weng Tonghe's diary entry for 1892/6/29. Weng referred to a painting by Lu Hui that Wu Dacheng had presented to him as a gift. For Weng Tonghe's biography, see Arthur W. Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, pp. 860-61.
 18. For Zhang Zhidong's biography, see Arthur W. Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, pp. 27-32.
 19. See the postscript Lu Hui wrote for Pang Yuanji's record of his painting collection, *Xuzhai minghua lu*, which was completed in 1909.
 20. Zhang Mingke, *Hansongge tanyi suolu*, vol. 6, p. 151.
 21. See Wu Hufan's colophon on cat. 20, written in 1950.
 22. Kirk Denton, ed., *Modern Chinese Literary Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 9.
 23. Hao Chang, "Neo-Confucianism and the Intellectual Crisis of Contemporary China," in *The Limits of Change: Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China*, ed. Charlotte Furth (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 281.
 24. Chen Duxiu, "Xianzhen yu rujiao" ("Constitutionalism and Confucianism"), vol. 2, no. 3 (1916), pp. 1-4.
 25. See Chen Duxiu's letter to Lu Cheng, *Xinqingnian*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1919), p. 86. The Four Wangs are the four early Qing orthodox painters, Wang Shimin (1592-1680), Wang Jian (1598-1677), Wang Hui (1632-1717), and Wang Yuanqi (1642-1715), whose work was still emulat-

ed by some traditionalists in the early twentieth century.

26. Cai Yuanpei, "Yi meiyu dai zongjiao shuo" ("Replacing Religion with Aesthetic Education"), *Xinqingnian*, vol. 3, no. 6 (1917), pp. 509–13; English translation by Julia Andrews, in *Modern Chinese Literary Thought*, ed. Kirk Denton, pp. 182–89.

27. *Ibid.*

28. See Kuiyi Shen, "Shanghai Society of the Late Nineteenth Century and the Shanghai School of Painting," *Studies in Art History*, no. 1, pp. 135–59.

29. See Chu-tsing Li, *Trends in Modern Chinese Painting*, p. 93.

30. See Xu's "Zhongguohua gailiang lun" ("About the Reform of Chinese Painting"), *Huixue zazhi*; reprinted in *Jindai Zhongguo meishu lunji*, ed. Ho Huaishuo (Taipei: Artists Press, 1990), vol. 5, p. 54.

31. Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth Century China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 69–70.

32. See Gao Jianfu, "Wo de xiandai guohua guan" ("My Views on Modern Chinese Painting"), reprinted in *Jindai Zhongguo meishu lunji*, vol. 5, pp. 69–92.

33. See Christina Chu, "Beyond Northern and Southern Landscape: Chinese Landscape Painting in the Twentieth Century," in *Twentieth Century Chinese Painting: Tradition and Innovation*, p. 74.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

35. See Yang Yi, *Haishang molin*, supp. vol., pp. 7–8.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

37. Chen Hengque, "The Value of Literati Painting," *Huixue zazhi*, vol. 2 (1921), pp. 1–6.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

40. See Zheng Yong, "Xiandai Zhongguo huajia ying fu zhi zeren" ("The Responsibility that Today's Chinese Painters Should Assume"), *Guohua yuekan*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1934), p. 17.

41. See "Editors' Words on the Inaugural Issue," *Guohua yuekan*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1934), p. 1.

42. Such as "Zhong xi shanshuihua sixiang zhuankan zhanwang" ("About the Special Issue on the Concepts of Chinese and Western Landscape Painting"), vol. 1, no. 4 (1935), p. 1; and "Zhongguo shanshuihua de shizi" ("About Teachers of Chinese Landscape Painting"), vol. 1, no. 4 (1935), pp. 80–85.

43. Huang Binhong, "Zhi zhi yi wen shuo" ("About the Relationship between Culture and Country"), *Guohua yuekan*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1934), p. 6.

44. *Ibid.*

45. These societies include: *Zhenshe* ("Zhen Society"; 1912–1942), with a branch later established in Guangzhou (see Xu Zhihao, *Zhongguo meishu shetuan manlu*, pp. 23–25); *Zhongguo jinshi shuhua yiguan xuehui* ("Chinese Seal-Carving, Calligraphy, and Painting Appreciation Society"), founded 1925 and issuing the journal *Yiguan* beginning 20 February 1926. The latter society changed its name and the journal's publication schedule, broadened the journal's focus to include Western arts, and finally ceased publication in August 1929 (see Xu Zhihao, *Zhongguo meishu qikan guoyanlu*, pp. 34–35).

46. Chu-tsing Li, "Tradition and Innovation in Twentieth Century Chinese Painting," 1995, p. 26.

47. Here I quote from Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth Century China*, p. 9.

48. See Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth Century China*, pp. 8–9.

49. See *Zhongguo meishujia renmin lu* ("Index of Chinese Artists") (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 1981), p. 393.

50. Chu-tsing Li, "Tradition and Innovation in Twentieth Century Chinese Painting," p. 31.

51. See Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth Century China*, p. 22, in which he cites James Cahill, *Go Shaseki, Sai Hakuseki* [Wu Changshi and Qi Baishi] (Tokyo, 1977). English trans., p. 60.

52. Arnold Chang and Brad Davis, *The Mountain Retreat—Landscape in Modern Chinese Painting*, p. 60.

53. Lu Fusheng, "An Introduction to Twentieth Century Chinese Painting," in *Twentieth Century Chinese Painting: Tradition and Innovation*, pp. 53–54.

17. Lu Hui (1851–1920)

Album of Miscellaneous Subjects

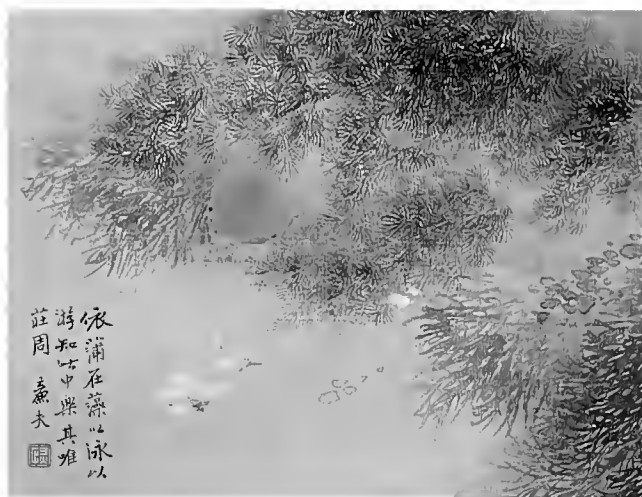
1891

Four leaves from an album of
twelve leaves, ink and color on silk;
each leaf 27 x 34.5 cm

Shanghai Museum



a



b



c



d

18. Lu Hui (1851-1920)

Landscape

1911

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

153.3 x 69.3 cm

Shanghai Museum



19. Gu Ynn (1835-1896)

Landscape in the Style of Wang Meng

1857

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

135.7 x 52 cm

Shanghai Museum



畫法元人後者往相擬
畫意必入相會得筆墨
展能活不活筆月起畫
必求波甘彼為佳 澤
畫法必當要入骨髓言之
必能然為我先解墨之得
無長博之符參指坐
上圖松石在牀倚湘几
展讀故道山家風味生
目前自不覺移我神
也予不解法亦詩家事耳
己巳庚戌年秋 畫堂即

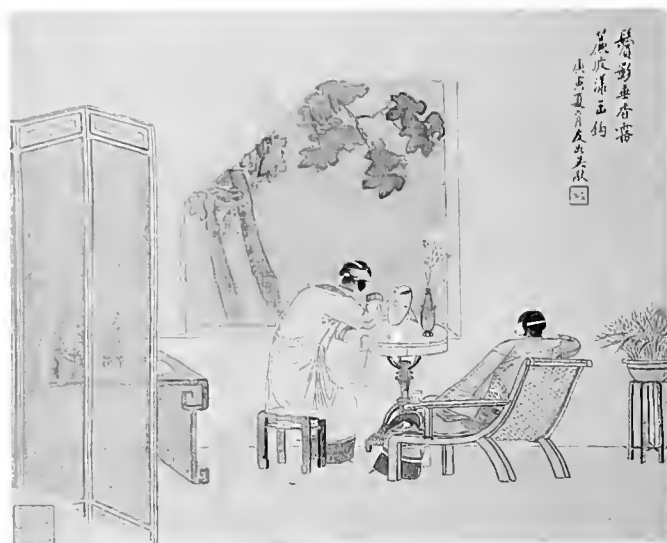
頃見鶴虛仿元人徐幼文山水知前見平湖實氏所藏徐冊之真也蓋鶴虛不啻下筆每仿一家必推尋端緒故古人之鬼入其
腕下非時文之泛然應之者對以覺神和氣靜不尚新奇而數年來夢想古人天賜歸還之矣 庚戌冬陸復清記



青林鬱鬱蒼蒼長松出林杪所以蔭生於此自好鶴虛畫深得元人精髓故其
墨與人迥異此由天授可謂人上之百也是懷筆墨收飲徑營恬淡非面壁十年未易悟此神境
庚戌十二月明齋自錄於海上

明初名賢畫家而
能與元賢抗衡者推
徐幼文王孟端孟端
畫畫竹數傳世尚
獲見幼文則身被
黨禍長途稀遇
鶴文登微王精華
法亦博此仿幼文本
洵有唐摹晉帖之
神可即以為幼文觀
也庚寅春吳嵩凱識

21. Wu Jiayou (Wu Youru; d. 1893)
Women in the Twelve Months
 1890
 Four leaves from an album of
 twelve leaves, ink and color on silk;
 each leaf 27.2 x 33.2 cm
 Shanghai Museum



a



b



c



d

22-a. **Wu Jiayou** (Wu Youru; d. 1893)
Thief in the Flower Garden
1891
Printed illustration (offset lithography)
for current-affairs section of *Feiyingge*
huabao ("Fleeting Shadow Pavilion
Pictorial") no. 17 [issue 2 of the second
lunar month] (1891); 25.5 x 12.8 cm
Private collection



22-b. **Wu Jiayou** (Wu Youru; d. 1893)
A Family Estate in Autumn
1891
Printed illustration (offset lithography)
for "Ladies in the Latest Fashions,"
Feiyingge huabao ("Fleeting Shadow
Pavilion Pictorial") no. 37 [issue 1 of the
ninth lunar month] (1891); 25.5 x 12.8 cm
Private collection



23. Wu Changshi (1844-1927)

Four Seasons

1911

Set of four hanging scrolls, ink and color
on paper; each 250.7 x 62.4 cm

Shanghai Museum





24. Wu Changshi (1844-1927)

Wild Roses and Loquats

1920

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

154.1 x 82.8 cm

Shanghai Museum



25. Wu Changshi (1844–1927)

Pomegranates and Plum Blossoms

1912

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

180.1 x 47.5 cm

Palace Museum, Beijing



26. Wang Zhen (Wang Yiting; 1867–1938)

Lotus and Birds

1918

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

178 x 82 cm

Collection of Michael Y. W. Shih, Tainan



27. Wang Zhen (Wang Yiting; 1867-1938)
Fate
1922
Pair of hanging scrolls, ink on paper;
each 120 x 61 cm
Duoyunxuan, Shanghai

算我盤錢鑄算不已盤算入
大權喜一銅算到九十二倍所
入者倍所出倍所出處饒風波
不亦不弄心平和茶飯安樂緣
多/回首處算奈何
辛酉秋二喜並吳昌碩題 七十六

人有千算天只一算而後覺算覺其半一性情
天付非分并能斷偶爾升成冷眼天看
辛酉秋仲
白如之王震寫



至苦之人越教外至惡之人教亦逾善惡到頭
後必報因果分兩般道無天堂地獄惟心造大願
能獲乃丈夫
辛酉秋仲
白如之王震寫



道旁行者數已神吾信大數不信人
然而此大亦只說法說因果因果在
不前進實各罰惡天不差毫毫何不踰錢
貴樂培根苗
辛酉重陽吳昌碩題

28. **Wang Zhen** (Wang Yiting; 1867-1938)
Dragon and Clouds
1920
Hanging scroll, ink on paper; 155 x 70 cm
Collection of Michael Y. W. Shih, Tainan



29. Cheng Zhang (1869–1938)

Cranes

1926

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

135 x 67 cm

Collection of Michael Y. W. Shih, Tainan



30. Cheng Zhang (1869–1938)

Rustic Scene

1930

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

133.6 x 50 cm

Shanghai Museum



31. Chen Hengque (Chen Shizeng; 1876-1923)

Album of Miscellaneous Paintings in an
Elongated Format

1922

Eight leaves from an album of
twelve leaves, ink and color on paper;

each leaf 35.9 x 9.8 cm

Shanghai Museum



a



b



雁湖空在自龍山頂上人華明新道遠人也三
冷淡天宮化景：宵以秋如獨福人前何處若安
塵心望海待情惜遠重景返留
寄調普文樂 吳文小令

e



遠霧連山白影霜著樹紅水程遙指一帆中
風掉頭西又中遙處夢已過山萬事
寄調劉金經 吳文小令

d

佛門以漏掃為第一執事自少壯
不若老之志不子起動作也系林有
掃掃而況而之掃金剛經不若時
不立活中而五年中不天 吳文小令



拂拭時一掃掃莫停勤苦門執事以為高閑
掃灑掃
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山說亦喻未來詢書
寄調撥景兒 吳文小令

f

32. Qi Baishi (1864–1957)

Landscape

1924

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

102.5 x 39 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



33. Qi Baishi (1864-1957)

Lotus Pond

1924

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

182 x 96 cm

Shanghai Museum



34. Gao Jianfu (1879–1951)

Flowers, Melon, Fish, and Insects

1905

Set of four hanging scrolls, ink and color
on paper; each 98 x 28 cm

Hong Kong Museum of Art, Provisional
Urban Council



35. Gao Jianfu (1879–1951)

Pine Tree

1936

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

133 x 69 cm

Hong Kong Museum of Art, Provisional
Urban Council



36. Gao Qifeng (1889-1933)

Spring Rain by the Willow Pond

Undated

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

100 x 100 cm

Shanghai Museum



37. Gao Qifeng (1889–1933)

Monkeys and Snowy Pine

1916

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

177 x 91.5 cm

Hong Kong Museum of Art, Provisional
Urban Council



38. Gao Jianfu (1879 - 1951)

Stupa Ruins in Burma

1934

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

162 x 84 cm

Art Museum, The Chinese University of
Hong Kong



39. Gao Jianfu (1879–1951)

Eagle

1929

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

167 x 83 cm

Art Museum, The Chinese University of
Hong Kong



10. Huang Binhong (1864–1955)

A Pair of Landscapes

1922

Pair of hanging scrolls, ink and color on
paper; each 172 x 21 cm

Collection of Michael Y.W. Shih, Tainan



41. Wu Hufan (1894–1968)

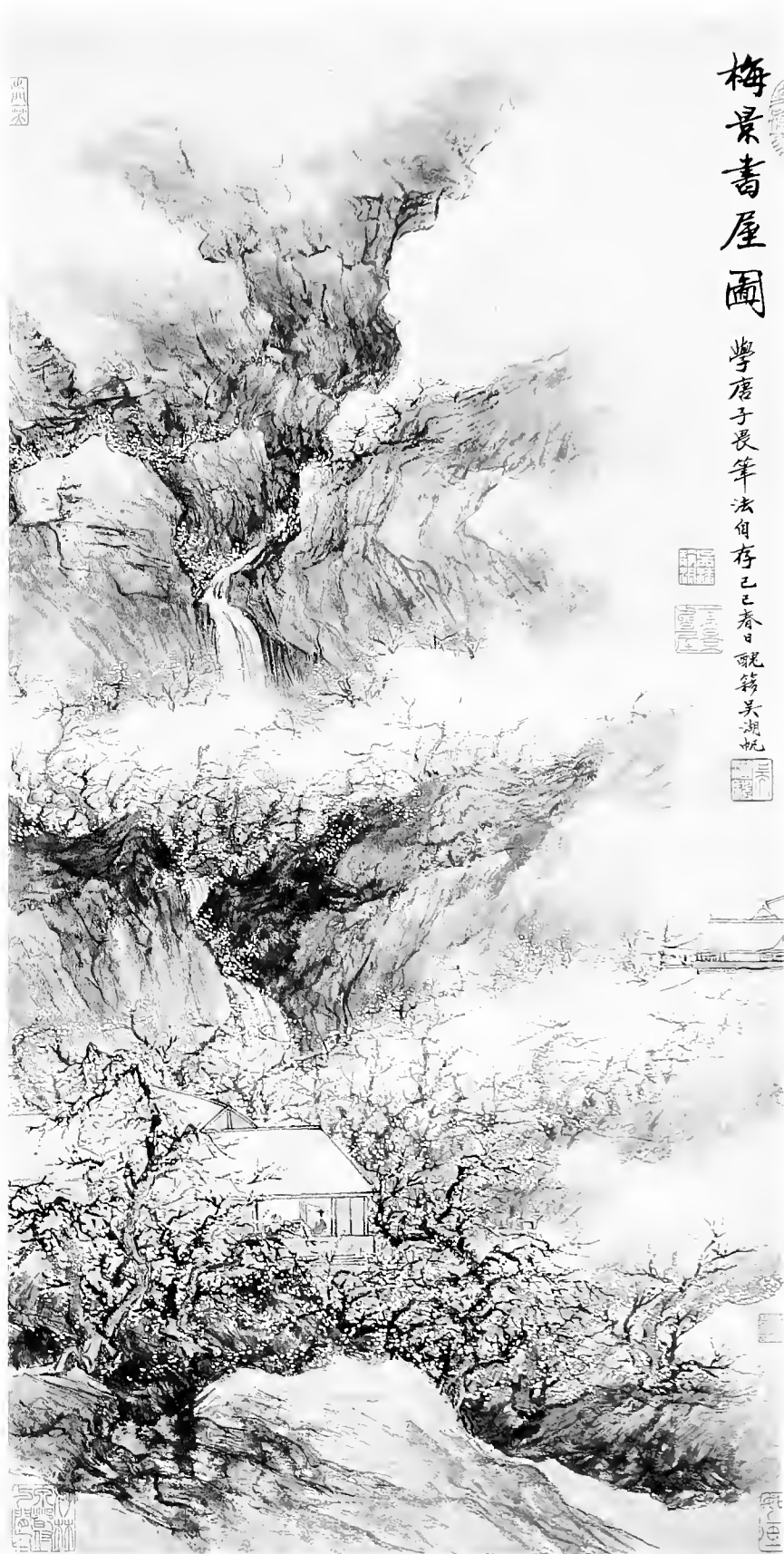
Meiyang Studio

1929

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

73.5 x 36.9 cm

Shanghai Museum



12. Wu Hufan (1894-1968)

Lofty Scholars in an Autumn Grove

1943

Ink and color on paper;

108.7 x 53.4 cm

M. K. Lau Collection, Ltd., Hong Kong



43. He Tianjian (1891–1977)

Conversation in the Autumn Woods

1939

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

111 x 61 cm

Shanghai Institute of Chinese Painting



44. Zhang Daqian (Chang Dai-chien;

1899-1983)

Self-pity

1934

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

130 x 49 cm

Palace Museum, Beijing



45. Zhang Daqian (Chang Dai-chien;

1899-1983)

Red Lotus

1917

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

153 x 75 cm

Shanghai Museum



46. **Liu Kuiling** (1885-1967)

Rooster and Hens

1933

Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk;

107.4 x 52.5 cm

Collection of Michael Y.W. Shih, Tainan



17. Xu Beihong (1895- 1953)

Four Horses

1940

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

110.5 x 122 cm

Xu Beihong Memorial, Beijing



48. Fu Baoshi (1904–1965)

Shitao's Studio

1945

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

137 x 42.5 cm

Nanjing Museum



49. Fu Baoshi (1904–1965)

Rain at Dusk

1945

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

103 x 59 cm

Nanjing Museum



50. Feng Zikai (1898–1975)

Gazing at the Lake

1940

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

61.1 x 39.5 cm

Collection of Jingguanlou, Hong Kong



51. Feng Zikai (1898–1975)

Protecting Life

1928

Four leaves from an album, ink on paper;

each leaf 23.7 x 16.7 cm

Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Hangzhou

開
棺



雀巢可俯而窺



遇
救

28



生
機



52. Pan Tianshou (1898-1971)

Black Chicken

1948

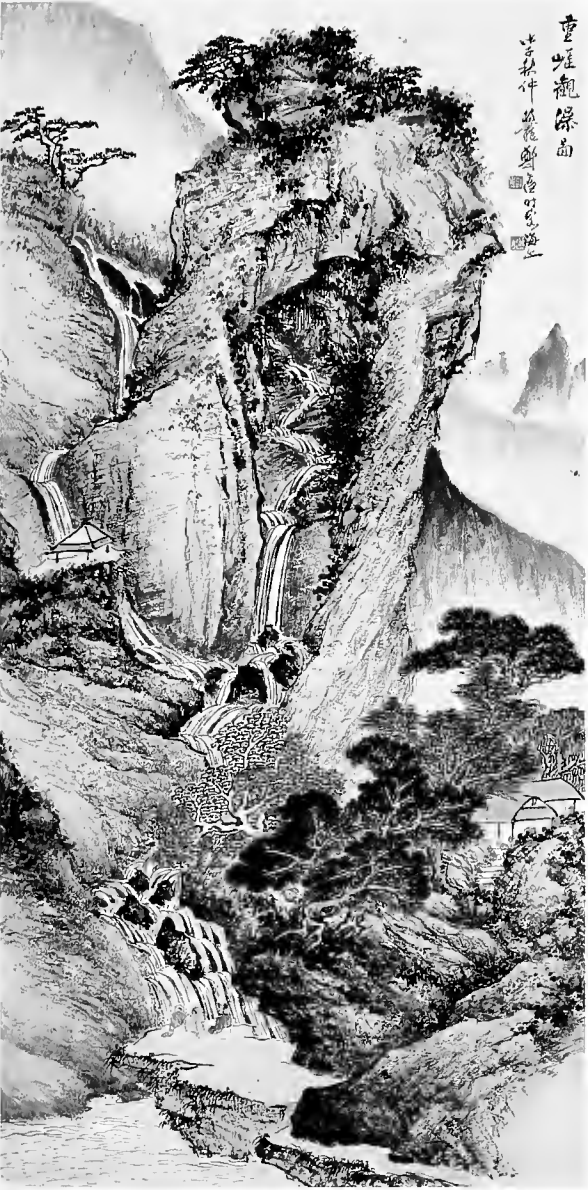
Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

68 x 136.5 cm

Pan Tianshou Memorial, Hangzhou



53. **Zheng Yong** (Zheng Wuchang;
1894–1952)
Gazing at the Waterfall
1948
Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;
105 x 51 cm
Collection of Michael Y.W. Shih, Tainan



54. **Huang Binhong** (1864–1955)
Landscape
1952
Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;
96.3 x 44.4 cm
Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Hangzhou



Chinese Calligraphy in the Modern Era

Xue Yongnian, Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing

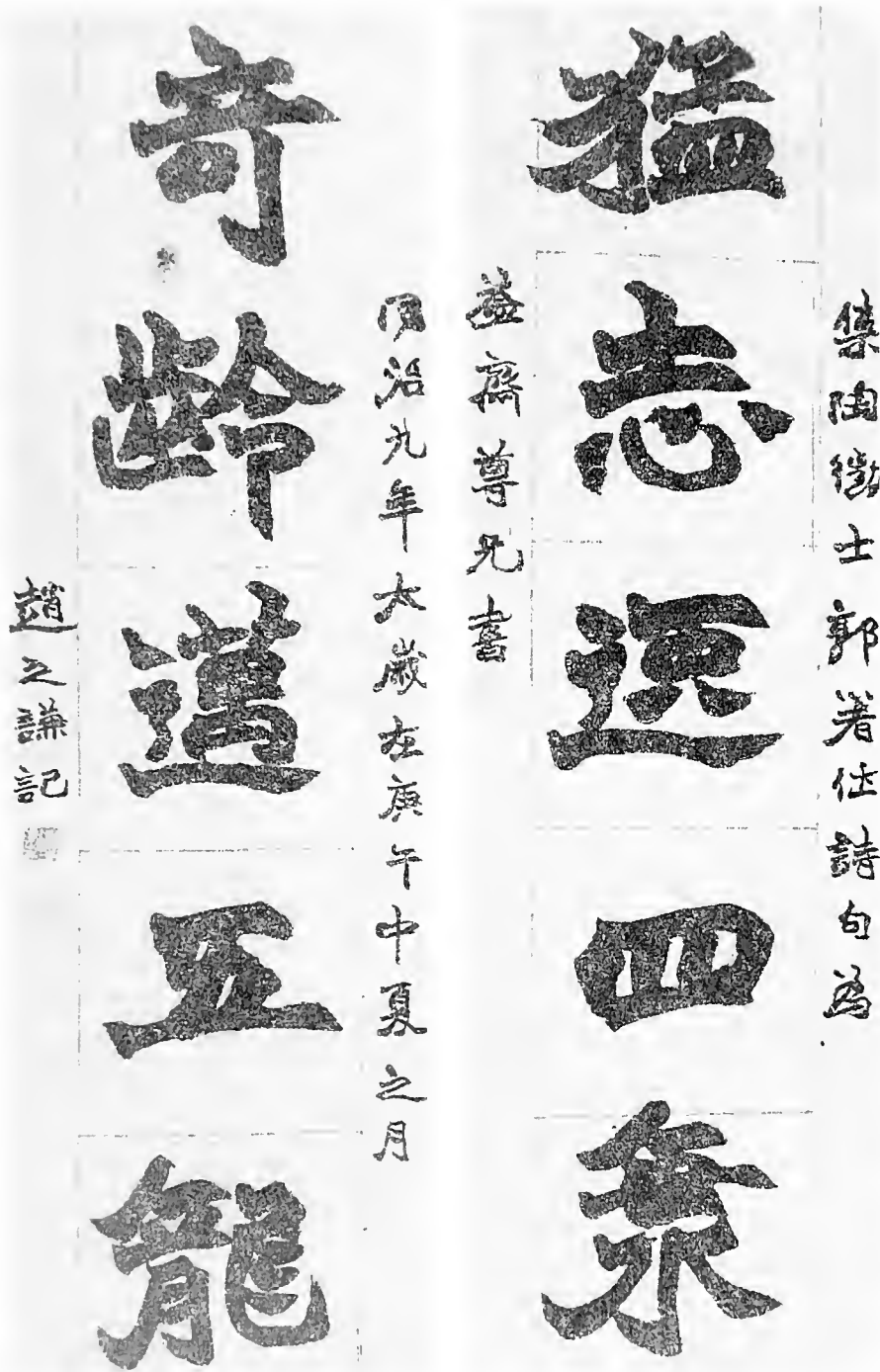


Figure 1. Zhao Zhiqian (1829–1884). Five-Character Couplet. 1870. Pair of hanging scrolls, ink on paper. The Shanghai Museum.

Amid the transformations of Chinese society and culture that began in the late nineteenth century, an emerging new spirit and new styles carried the ancient tradition of Chinese calligraphy into the modern era. Calligraphers who devoted themselves to innovation in culture and society selectively integrated new ideas with selectively retained elements of traditional calligraphy. They reconceived tradition, effectively advancing the development of their art, and created conditions for calligraphy to comprehend modernity during the 1980s and 1990s.

A review of the evolution of modern Chinese calligraphy reveals three tensions that directly influenced the understanding and practice of calligraphy. The first is the tension or interaction between emulation of *tie* and of *bei*.^{*} To revitalize calligraphy, one group of modern calligraphers looked to the script styles found primarily in northern China, on stone carvings of the Qin and Han periods and on stone steles (*bei*) of the Northern Wei period. With the same objective, other modern calligraphers looked to the styles of Wang Xizhi (307–365) and Wang Xianzhi (344–386) of the Jin dynasty in southern China, as found in *tie*. The second source of tension is self-consciousness about the relationship between calligraphy's practical function as communication and textual record and its aesthetic function as a creative visual art. The third is the tension between self-expression and craft. If the predominant value is self-expression, the calligrapher may well be inspired to breach convention for the sake of individuality; if craft predominates, the calligrapher is more likely to innovate within the traditional conventions. Every era since the late Qing period has produced artists whose work exemplifies the transformations in modern calligraphy that issue from these three nodes.

The period between the end of the nineteenth century and the 1930s may be described as the early period of modern Chinese calligraphy. From the beginning of this period the emulation of *tie* (*tie-xue*)—ink rubbings primarily of the works of Wang Xizhi and Wang Xianzhi, which had been paramount since the Song period (960–1279)—was already in decline. The standard script (*kaishu* or *zhenshu*) had lost its vitality, degenerating into the

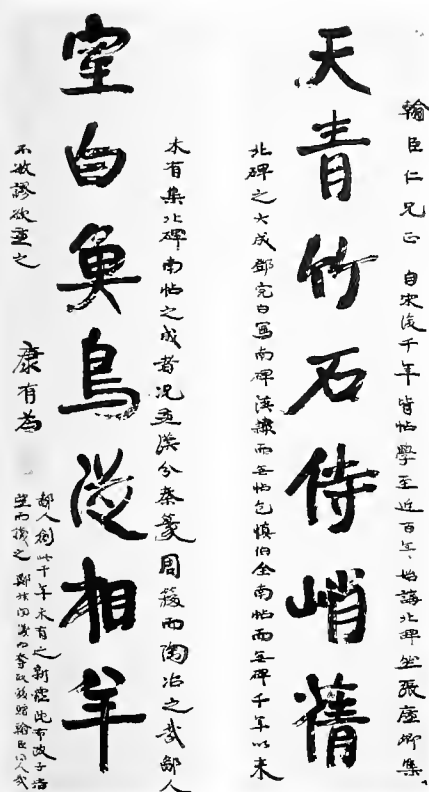


Figure 2. Kang Youwei (1858–1927). Seven-Character Couplet in Semicursive Script. Undated. Pair of hanging scrolls, ink on paper. The Art Museum, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

overly decorative, rote “examination-hall” style (*guan’geti*) that had become de rigueur on the civil-service exams. From the mid-eighteenth century stone epitaphs—particularly stone steles of the Wei period—had been excavated in considerable numbers, and the writing style of their inscriptions provided an important corrective to the lifeless examination-hall style. This “stele style” was widely endorsed, in such critical and theoretical writings as Ruan Yuan’s *On the Northern and Southern Schools of Calligraphy* (*Nanbei shupai lun*) and *On Northern Steles and Southern Tie* (*Beibei nantie lun*), 1849; Bao Shichen’s *The Paired Oars of Art’s Boat* (*Yizhou shuangji*), 1855; and Liu Xizai’s *On Art* (*Yigai*), 1783. Such writings, together with the national self-strengthening ideology that arose in response to Western pressure on China, generated a preference for virile power as the aesthetic ideal in calligraphy.

Zhao Zhiqian (1829–1884), who had dual status as a scholar-official and as a professional calligrapher, painter, and seal carver, excelled at many script styles but specialized in standard script.** His early work followed the structurally disciplined but fluid style of Yan Zhenqing (709–785), but later he accepted Bao Shichen’s *beixue* theories and his work altered to the bolder style associated with stele inscriptions of the Northern Wei period. Many of his contemporaries who studied northern steles emulated the showy script styles found on Northern Wei period Buddhist sculptures at Longmen, but he instead followed the less ostentatious strength of another much-admired Northern Wei inscription which had been carved on a cliff face in 511 CE and was known as the Zheng Wengong *bei*. His standard-script calligraphy was a powerful corrective to the weak, stiff, overcontrolled examination-hall style. His structures combine irregularity with order, and his brushwork is skillful and fluid. His variegated calligraphy demonstrates the integration of elite (*ya*, “elegant”) and popular (*su*, “common”) elements, characteristic of the frustrated scholar-official forced to earn his livelihood as a professional artist. The expansive, lively structure and the combination of angular and rounded brushwork in his *Five-Character Couplet* of 1870 (fig. 1) pro-

duced a standard script of monumental power and refined fluency. His pursuit of charm within power, as well as his transformation of the antique into the vernacular, is seen as well in his seal script, clerical script, and semicursive script calligraphy. In a work of the preceding year, *Calligraphy in Various Scripts* (cat. 55), we can see that his seal script (far right) and clerical script (right) originated in the styles of Deng Shiru (1743–1805) and Wu Rangzhi (1799–1879), but to their solemn power and elegant tranquility he added charm and liveliness, making his calligraphy sweeter and more vivid. Although the semicursive scrolls (left) are not the best of the four, they still show his tendency to seek a natural quality and avoid the appearance of purely mechanical skill. Among calligraphers who followed the Northern Wei stele style, it was Zhao Zhiqian who brought a popular flavor to literati taste.

Kang Youwei (1858–1927) not only created a unique semicursive script style that embodies the principles of Northern Wei stele style, but also related stele-style calligraphy to his theories of historical evolution. A scholar who only passed the imperial examinations after multiple attempts, he eventually became a leader of the constitutional reform and modernization movement. In 1888, before the reform proposals were put into effect, he wrote *Guangyi zhoushuangji*,¹ in which he clearly stated: “Control of the calligraphy brush is like control of the country: the shifts in power are the same,” and “Creating the new is superior to preserving the old.”² His early calligraphy had been influenced by the examination-hall style of the Song and Ming periods, and he subsequently followed Tang styles, but after studying the Wei stele style, especially the well-known “Stone Gate Inscription” (*Shimenming*) of 509, he began exploring styles of all periods from Qin and Han to contemporary. It is said that his calligraphy benefited from his study of a text called “Record of the Thousand Autumns Pavilion” and of a famous couplet inscribed by Chen Tuan (ca. 910–989), who had lived as a hermit on Mt. Hua before being called to court. He brought the innovative spirit that characterized his constitutional reform to his calligraphy theory, in which he promoted the

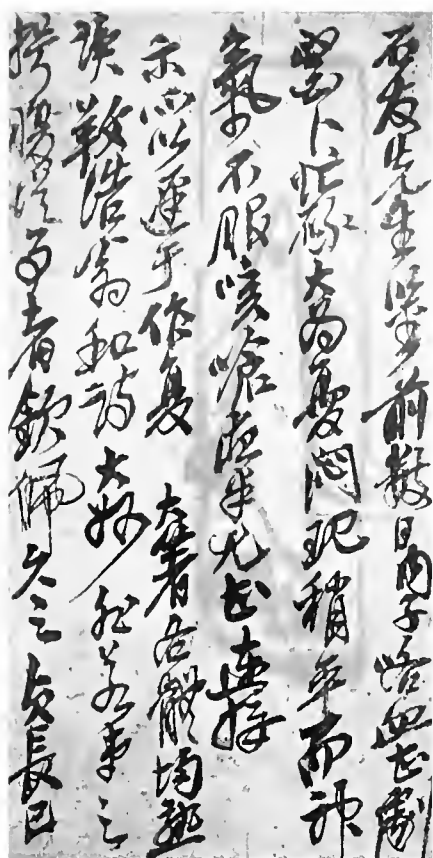


Figure 3. Wu Changshi (1884–1927). Letter to Shen Shiyu. Undated. Ink on paper. Rongbaozhai, Beijing.



Figure 4. Shen Yinmo (1883–1971). Poem by Du Fu on a Round Fan. Ink on paper. From Shen Yinmo shufaji.

rediscovered power of the vigorous Northern Wei styles and denigrated the courtly Tang styles practiced by most imperial officials. Although his semiregular (*xingkai*) and semicursive (*xingshu*) calligraphy did not perfectly realize his theories, they still formed a unique style, with assertive structures and free brushwork. Kang Youwei's calligraphy, powerful and unconstrained, is free of the showy exaggerations perpetrated by mannered imitators of Northern Wei steles, escapes the slickness of Zhao Zhiqian's popularization of antique styles, and demonstrates this reformist politician's open-mindedness and vigor. The Palace Museum's *Calligraphy* hanging scroll (cat. 57) may be taken to represent Kang Youwei's general style, tightly structured but free in its details, thus manifesting an expansive power. The brushwork does not follow the asymmetrical convention of the standard and cursive scripts of the Jin and Tang periods, in which the horizontal strokes slant markedly downward toward the left; instead, Kang Youwei has adopted the manner of seal and clerical script, in which the horizontal strokes are slightly curved but slant minimally if at all. The *Seven-Character Couplet in Semicursive Script* in the Art Museum of the Chinese University of Hong Kong has a firm but relaxed structure and powerful though seemingly naïve brushwork (fig. 2). In the accompanying inscription, Kang Youwei further expresses his ambition to create a great synthesis of the northern stele script, southern *tie* script, Han clerical script, Qin lesser seal (*xiaozhuan*) script, and Zhou dynasty greater seal (*dazhuan*) script, using the Northern Wei stele style as the unifying principle.

Wu Changshi (1844–1927) pioneered a different form of revivalism, in which he infused the northern stele style into seal script calligraphy. He was from an educated but poor rural family, and although he once held office, serving as prefect in Andong county (present-day Lianshui), Jiangsu Province, for one month, he eventually became a professional painter, calligrapher, and seal carver. The second half of his life he spent in Shanghai, but he never forgot that “he was a farmer from the paddyfields.”³ In his early calligraphy he emulated Yan Zhenqing of the Tang

dynasty, but he later studied the works of the Eastern Han master Zhong You (151–230 CE) and Han and Wei period stele inscriptions. At about age thirty he obtained a rubbing of Stone Drum script (*shiguwen*) from a Suzhou friend. He liked the powerful spirit of this ancient seal script, dating from some time during the Eastern Zhou period (770–221 BCE), and he studied it constantly over the following half century. Using this even more ancient script as a stepping-stone, he worked to surpass Jin (265–419) and Northern Wei styles. He combined the aesthetic of calligraphy with those of painting and seal carving and gradually came to realize that “today so many contemporary people are imitators of the ancients, but who did the ancients follow? Poetry, prose, calligraphy, and painting attain truth, and the important thing is that you study hard to seek comprehensive understanding of all of them.”⁴ From the age of sixty Wu Changshi developed his own creative spirit or, in his own words, “respected myself as an ancient.”⁵ He studied the styles of the ancient masters but also developed his own individual characteristics, merging elements of the former into the latter. He said, “The ancients are the guests, and I am the host.”⁶ The four-scroll set *Stone Drum Script* (cat. 56), which he made when he was sixty-one, embodies such a fusion: the inspiration of his Stone Drum rubbing, refracted through his own creative spirit, produced an original work at once simple and monumental, well structured and irregular, unsophisticated and bold. Every stroke is vibrant and strong, combining the cultivated aura of the literatus and the primitive simplicity of the farmer. Wu Changshi excelled, as well, at semicursive script, into which he infused the simplicity, verve, strength, and astringency of the Stone Drum inscriptions. His letters to Shen Shiyu (see fig. 3), now in the Rongbaozhai collection, are a typical example.

The latest stage in the evolution of modern Chinese calligraphy comprises the 1930s to the 1980s. At the beginning of this period stele-style calligraphy continued popular, and powerful, individualistic writing styles predominated. Two tendencies, however, increasingly debased that manner: an overemphasis on self-express-

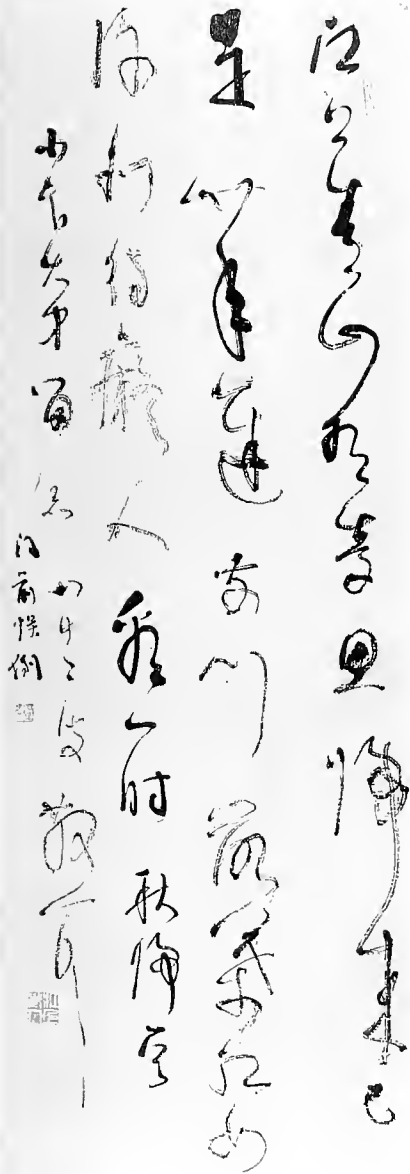


Figure 5. Lin Sanzhi (1898–1989). Poem by Huaitsu, 1979. Hanging scroll, ink on paper. From Lin Sanzhi shufa xuanji.

sion at the expense of legibility, and an overemphasis on individualism taking the form of a mannered boldness. In response to the first defect, a movement arose to reform writing for the convenience of the masses, and to create a model script that would be beautiful, legible, and easy to learn. Yu Youren (1878–1964), whose standard script in the stele style was remarkable, answered these new demands by reviving the study of *tie* and by working to establish a standard cursive script (*caoshu*). The pendulum of taste swung back somewhat, from self-expression, individualism, and naïve vigor toward the elegant and restrained styles of classical calligraphy and the skillful brush techniques that these required. The calligraphers who revived *tierue* are noted for the naturalness of their writing, whether crisp, tranquil semicursive or restrained, subtle cursive. Shen Yinmo (1883–1971) and Lin Sanzhi (1898–1964) are representative of these *tierue* calligraphers.

Born to a peasant family in north-west China, Yu Youren, like associates in the Lingnan school (see “The Lingnan School” in this volume), was an adherent of Sun Yat-sen. He participated in the 1911 revolution, and was subsequently a high official in the Nationalist government. His calligraphy he based on the Northern Wei stele style. He later wrote that early in life, while in the military, he daily copied rubbings from sixth-century steles (*bei*)—the “Stone Gate Inscription” (*Shimenming*) (which also served as a model for Kang Youwei) in the morning and the “Twenty Longmen Pieces” (*Longmen ershi pin*) every evening.⁷ He wrote that he “cleansed [his mind] amidst the caves and cliffs, and wandered among the Buddhist sculptures.”⁸ Wandering thus, he found that the inscriptions on stone steles of the Wei period had been written in red pigment with a brush before being incised. The brushed characters were not angular and sharp like the carved characters. By incorporating some of the quality of the brushed characters into his style, he added *tiexue* to *beirue*, elegance to forcefulness. His standard-script calligraphy is irregular in structure but still well balanced. The composition is somewhat open, even sparse, but the simple brush strokes are at once forceful and refined. In overall effect, his

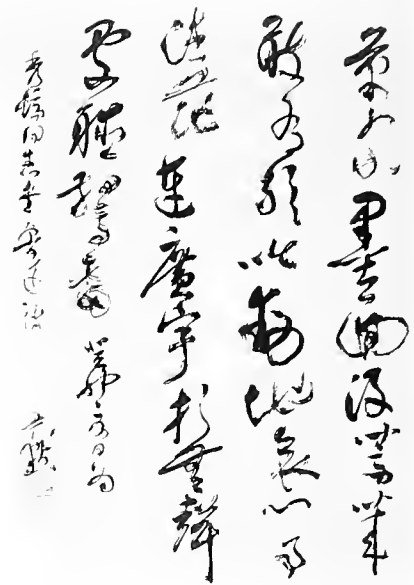


Figure 6. Shen Yinmo (1883–1971). Poem by Lu Xun, 1963. Hanging scroll, ink on paper. From Shen Yinmo shufaji.

writing is both graceful and vigorous. His calligraphy of this period seems to reveal something of his character, combining the vigor and boldness associated with natives of China’s northwest with the scholarly qualities he embodied throughout his years as a high-ranking civil and military official.

In his middle years Yu Youren’s interests shifted from standard to cursive script, but because he began with standard script in the stele style, his cursive-style brushwork has a unique quality. The *Five-Character Couplet* (cat. 58), probably written in middle age, displays cursive elements in his stele-style standard script. The expansive writing is powerful, free, and spontaneous.

As an elder of the national revolution in a nation of widespread illiteracy, Yu Youren was very concerned with calligraphy as an instrument of communication and record-keeping. At the beginning of the 1930s, in response to the movement to reform China’s writing system, he set himself to devise national standards for a cursive script that would be “easy to read, easy to write, precise, and beautiful.” The purpose was to strengthen the nation by making the people literate. “Today, the



Figure 7. Wang Dongling (b. 1945). Triptych from the Three Teachings, 1987. Hanging scrolls, ink on paper. Private collection.

world is big, people's affairs are complicated, building our nation is difficult, and the struggle for survival is vicious. Time is precious, a thousand times more precious than in the past. That is why we should popularize cursive script throughout the land, to make it easy to write and thus vigorously develop the nation."¹⁰ To answer this need, Yu Youren devised a "standard cursive script," to be written (as all scripts had been) with the brush. But the shift to modern writing implements such as pens and pencils further separated calligraphy's linguistic and aesthetic functions, negating the practical utility of his labors. Although standard script rather than cursive was adopted as the national model, Yu Youren's research and innovations in cursive script were published in Shanghai in 1936, under the title *Standard Cursive Script*, and remain an essential reference for students and scholars of cursive-script calligraphy.

Shen Yinmo became the standard-bearer for the Wang Xizhi style of semi-cursive *tiexue* script during the 1950s. When young, he had published *baihua* ("vernacular") poetry as part of the culturally iconoclastic May Fourth Movement and had edited the progressive journal *Xin qingnian* ("New Youth"). His early calligraphy, however, was quite conventional. His semicursive script was strongly influenced by Ouyang Xun's (557–641) classic *Jiuchenggong* as copied by the nineteenth-century calligrapher Huang Ziyuan. Because his writing style was criticized by his friend Chen Duxiu, he began to study stele styles and calligraphy theory, working very hard on his brushwork.¹¹ He emulated Chu Suiliang's (596–658) style as a starting point, but he also studied various masters of the Jin, Tang, Song, and Yuan (1279–1368) periods, and worked to propagate the classic Wang Xizhi style. With the decline of the stele style, Shen Yinmo became the central figure in the revival of the Wang Xizhi style during the 1950s and 1960s. His emphasis on technical skill was extremely influential. He excelled at standard and semi-cursive script, but specialized in the latter. His *Poem by Du Fu on a Round Fan* (fig. 4) is forceful, elegant, restrained, fluent, and serene, reflecting his creative accomplishments within the canon of the Wang style. After the age of sixty he

incorporated the vigor and dynamism of "mad cursive" script (*kuangcao*) and draft cursive script (*zhangcao*) into his elegant, tranquil semicursive style, thus gradually transcending the Wang Xizhi style and reaching new artistic heights. His 1963 *Poem by Lu Xun* (fig. 6) is a good example of that fusion.

Lin Sanzhi's achievements in cursive-script calligraphy after the *tiexue* revival were considerable. He studied poetry, calligraphy, and painting in early life, concentrating on calligraphy after 1950; his art reached its maturity in the 1970s and 1980s. He began his calligraphy study with the Tang masters, then went further back in time to Han and Wei models, and finally proceeded to masters of the Song through Qing periods. Although he studied steles, he later shifted to the *tiexue* style. After the age of sixty he concentrated on cursive calligraphy, "taking Wang Xizhi as spiritual master, the monk Huaisu [737–after 798] as formal model, Wang Duo (1592–1652) as intimate friend, and Dong Qichang [1555–1636] and Zhu Yunming [1460–1527] as fellows."¹² Inspired by Huang Binhong (1864–1955), he deeply understood the true essence of brushwork and the use of ink. His calligraphy has a painterly quality: gentle, powerful brush strokes, controlled but free, fluid but syn-copated. His ink tonalities are abundantly varied: the wet lines are very black and rich, while the dry strokes are pale and rubbed like texture strokes in painting. He created an intensely spiritual manner that reflected one aspect of the rapidly changing aesthetics of the time. The brushwork of his 1979 *Poem by Huaisu* (fig. 5) is strong and lively; the ink is dry but rich; and the execution is smooth and energetic. The *Five-Character Couplet*, written when he was ninety (cat. 59), is a good example of his semicursive calligraphy, possessing the seemingly contradictory qualities of naiveté and skill.

Through the explorations and achievements of the important calligraphers discussed above, we can see that the interaction of *tiexue* and *beixue*, the contradictions between calligraphy's practical and aesthetic functions, and the necessary balance between spontaneous expression and learned skill posed several constant problems in the development of modern Chinese calligraphy. How best to

selectively adapt traditional elements, break old conventions, and express a new spirit? How might the calligrapher break the fetters of the past, establish new standards, and restructure tradition? How should the calligrapher develop different techniques to create varied artistic styles? During the very period when these conundrums were being addressed, the art of calligraphy gradually distanced itself from its original practical function, perhaps because its utilitarian function of recording language was gradually taken over by pens, pencils, and even computers. Calligraphy as an art is no longer an attainment of all educated people; it has instead become more and more professionalized. Particularly since the 1980s, however, artists who excel at both painting and calligraphy are introducing painterly qualities into calligraphy, thus opening new directions for calligraphy's future (fig. 7).

Translated by Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen

**Translators' note:*

Tie are examples of the writing styles of famous early calligraphers, either original manuscripts or ink rubbings taken from writings of master calligraphers that had been incised in stone for purposes of preservation. *Tie*, sometimes translated as "copybooks," most commonly preserve classical works of the Jin (265–419), Tang (618–907), and Song (960–1279) dynasties.

Bei, which means "stone stele," refers in the calligraphic context to commemorative inscriptions carved on steles by anonymous artisans, mostly of the Qin (221–207 BCE), Han (206 BCE–220 CE), and Northern Wei (386–534) dynasties. The unearthing of many of these steles in the eighteenth century increasingly stimulated the study and appreciation of the writing styles found on them (*beizue*, literally, "stele study").

******The styles that most interested Zhao are these: (1) seal script (*zhuan-shu*), an archaic script form standardized in the third century BCE, characterized by elongated characters written with curving strokes of even width; it was originally carved on stone or cast in metal;

(2) clerical script (*lishu*), which developed in the first and second centuries CE, whose characters are squarish or even slightly horizontal oblongs, with angular corners and an emphasis on flaring horizontal strokes; (3) standard or regular script (*kaishu* or *zhenshu*), codified in the sixth and seventh centuries, which requires slightly vertical characters that are relatively uniform in shape and size, with individual strokes that are precise and complete and utilize both the curves and the angles of the earlier scripts; and (4) semicursive or "running" script (*xingshu*), a more fluent version of standard script, in which the characters remain separate but their strokes are somewhat abbreviated and connected. A fifth style, cursive or draft script (*caoshu*), not only abbreviates and connects strokes within a character but often connects two or more characters as well.

NOTES

1. See Kang Nanhai *zibian nianpu* ("Autobiographical Chronology of Kang Youwei") (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992).
2. Kang Youwei, *Guangyi zhoushuangji*, in *Yilin mingshu congkan* ("Famous Writings on Art Series") (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1983).
3. See Qian Juntao, "Lüelun Wu Changshi ("On Wu Changshi")," in *Huiyi Wu Changshi* ("Recollections of Wu Changshi") (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 1986).
4. Wu Changshi, *Fouluji keyin* (n.p., n.d.), p. 148.
5. Wu Changshi, *Fouluji keyin*.
6. Wu Changshi, *Fouluji keyin*, inscription for Wang Yiting.
7. From a poem by Yu Youren.
8. From a poem by Yu Youren.
9. Yu Youren, *Biaojun caoshu* ("Standard Cursive Script"), preface (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1983).
10. Ma Guoquan, *Shen Yinmo lunshu congkao* ("Essays on Calligraphy by Shen Yinmo") (N.p.: Shenghuo dushu xinzhi sanlian shudian, 1981).
11. Lin Sanzhi, *Lin Sanzhi shufa xuanji* ("Selected Calligraphy of Lin Sanzhi"), artist's preface (Nanjing: Jiangsu meisbu chubanshe, 1985).

晨遊太山雲霧窈窕忽
逢二童頰色鮮好乘彼
白鹿手騎丹芝草
飛龍篇

吳州聖賢之泉藪帝王之
舊地盧植吳州風土記

同治己巳七月為
厲初廿仁弟大人屬書即希正可之謙



五帝修名立功修惠
 成化統綏陰陽之類
 使禍故帝眷帝也
 注 運斗樞

慎徽五典勤恤民隱
 心顧下
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57. Kang Youwei (1858–1927)

Calligraphy

Undated

Hanging scroll, ink on paper;

152 x 41 cm

Palace Museum, Beijing

结茅茅广立别室
松名青松江清日夕入我
多我人踪
题蕉山别室于康有为

58. Yu Youren (1878–1964)

Five-Character Couplet

Undated

Pair of hanging scrolls, ink on paper;

each 246 x 61 cm

Shanghai Museum

事业富清机
于右任

江山飞鹿藻
子徵先生正

59. Lin Sanzhi (1898–1964)

Calligraphy

Undated

Pair of hanging scrolls, ink on paper;

each 129.5 x 31. cm

Jiangsu Provincial Art Gallery, Nanjing



60. Shen Yinmo (1883–1971)

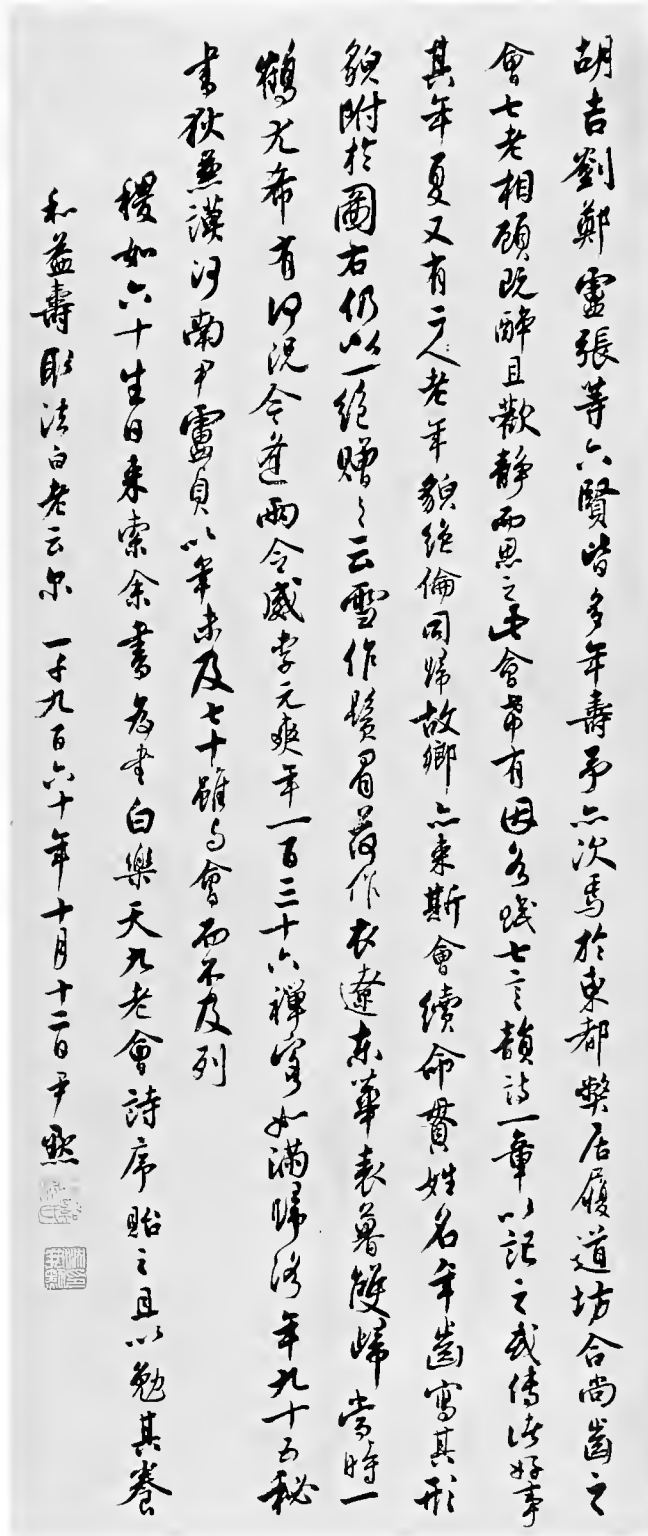
Calligraphy on the Poetry of Bo Juyi

1960

Hanging scroll, ink on paper:

170 x 70 cm

Collection of Chen Beixin, Xi'an



The Modernist Generations, 1920–1950

Reforms in Education and the Beginning of the Western-Style Painting Movement in China

Mayching Kao, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

The author has kindly consented to publication of this revised version of her seminal research on this field, which first appeared in New Asia Academic Bulletin (Hong Kong), vol. IV.

The twentieth century saw a great many Chinese artists turning away from the venerable Chinese tradition to learn from the West. They gave up silks and papers for linen canvas; soft, pliable brushes for stiff European-made brushes; stone-ground ink and water-based pigments for thick oil pigments; and scrolls for framed pictures. As an art form transplanted from the West, oil painting came to be called *xiyanghua*, *xihua*, or *yanghua* ("Western-style painting"), in order to differentiate it from painting of the traditional schools, which was designated, by contrast, *guocuihua* ("national essence painting") or *guohua* ("national painting"). *Yanghua* and *guohua* coexist in modern China, and though their materials and techniques remain distinct, the two borrow from each other so that their styles intermingle and at times become indistinguishable.

The concerted efforts to establish Western-style painting in China have been named the Western-Style Painting Movement (*yanghua yundong*).¹ Its impact on the development of modern Chinese art goes beyond the transplanting of schools of Western art into China. On the contrary, the movement is intricately tied to the struggles of modern Chinese artists to revitalize a tradition considered in the early years of the present century to be conservative and stagnant, and to evolve a new art that is both modern and Chinese. In particular, pioneers of Western-style art saw this foreign art form as a strong remedy to rejuvenate—i.e., to modernize—the ailing tradition and as a powerful tool to serve the needs of a new reality. Therefore their efforts have been more appropriately called the New Art Movement (*xinyishu yundong*),² and later, when art came under the influence of proletarian ideology, the Burgeoning Art Movement (*xinxing meishu yundong*).³

The study and assimilation of Western art and theory on such a massive scale could only have taken place at a time when China was experiencing traumatic upheavals in literally all aspects of traditional existence, the crises triggered by the overwhelming intrusion of Western civilization since the mid-nineteenth century. Many of the reforms and subsequent changes in China's slow and waver-

ing evolution from a Confucian empire into a modern nation paved the way for the spread of Western art. Therefore the spread of Western art in modern China must be studied in the context of political, economic, social, and cultural changes taking place in the past century.

It is common knowledge that the history of Western art in China may be traced to the sixteenth century, when Jesuit missionaries introduced Western paintings and prints to further the propagation of their faith. In subsequent centuries, largely through the activities of missionary-artists in China, Western modes of shading and perspective became known to court painters, professional portraitists, and popular genre painters. Historians of Chinese art generally agree, however, that this meeting of Chinese and European art did not "produce any deeper or lasting effect on the native painters" or "remove them very far from the main high-road of traditional Chinese painting."⁴ Therefore these early contacts are largely unrelated to developments in the early years of the twentieth century. The eagerness to learn from the West signifies a momentous break with tradition that can best be explained by the Western impact of the past century, unprecedented in its breadth of activity and depth of significance.

In surveying the complex historical background from which the Western-Style Painting Movement emerged, we look for conditions that prepared a favorable reception for Western art, or for elements that shaped the character of the movement. First of all, paintings in Western mediums had been produced for export by professional craftsmen in Guangzhou, Hong Kong, and Macao since the late eighteenth century. Though never integrated into the mainstream of Chinese painting, these China-trade paintings certainly exposed a great many Chinese to the techniques and methods of Western art, especially in realistic portraiture and scenes of the China coast.⁵ In that sense China-trade paintings prepared the ground for the spread of Western art in China. In the early years of the Western-Style Painting Movement no qualitative distinctions were made between different kinds of Western-style art. Yet the superficial grafting of seem-

ingly exotic Western elements onto Chinese artistic traditions was at once rejected, by both artists and public, when masterpieces of Western art became better known in China.

Secondly, Western-style commercial art produced by Chinese artists—calendar paintings, cigarette picture cards, advertisements, and backdrops for theaters and photographic studios—had been appearing in China, mostly in the treaty ports, in response to the penetration of foreign capital and merchandise.⁶ These commercial activities would normally have had no influence on the realm of fine art, but Western art, having been borrowed to answer the needs of a rapidly changing society, in the process trained the pioneers of the Western-style art movement.

Thirdly, the rapid expansion of book publishing and journalism provided a ready outlet for portrayals of the novelty of contemporary life and exposés of the weaknesses of a disintegrating empire. For these new subjects, artists were inspired to explore new modes of expression. Their illustrations and cartoons were featured in newspapers and journals as well as in the newly popular magazines of “mass literature.” By comparison with the above-mentioned commercial art activities, the alliance between publishers and artists had a more fruitful and lasting influence; it not only inspired the publication of magazines exclusively devoted to art but also provided income for many of the early adherents of the Western-style art movement.

The fourth and the most important foundation for the development of Western-style art in China can be found in education, which underwent drastic reforms in the last years of the Qing dynasty. These educational reforms opened China to new knowledge and planted the seeds of future change. It is the purpose of this paper to study how these reforms paved the way for the introduction of Western art into China and to what extent they influenced the Western-style art movement in the decades that followed. Events of 1912 were crucial in the early development of that movement. In that year the new Republic was declared, and further reforms in education were initiated by Cai Yuanpei (1867–1940), then Minister of Education,

who led in the discovery of the aesthetic and expressive elements in Western art. At the same time Cai assigned important social functions to art and artists in modern China. These ideas, first enunciated explicitly in 1912, would be taken up by the adherents of the new art movement and therefore their first utterance signifies the beginning of this movement.⁷

WESTERN DRAWING IN CHINESE SCHOOLS BEFORE 1902

Western art gained a foothold in China in the twentieth century through educational reforms in the last decade of the Manchu monarchy. As a major effort toward the modernization of China, a comprehensive system of schools, modeled on those of Japan and Western nations, was established by imperial edict in 1902, following Zhang Zhidong's (1837–1909) perceptive observation that “the strength of Western countries lies in the strength of their schools”.⁸ The curricula emphasized Western learning, especially subjects related to science and technology. Western art entered China by way of a subject called *tuhua*, “drawing and painting,” which by 1902–1903 was incorporated into all levels of the curriculum, including primary schools, middle schools, university preparatory schools, specialized colleges, and technical institutes.⁹ Thus 1902 was the first benchmark in the study of Western art in China. The next significant date was 1906, when painting and handicraft sections were established at the Liangjiang High Normal School (*Liangjiang youji shifan xuetang*) in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, and at Beiyang Normal School (*Beiyang shifan xuetang*) in Baoding, Hebei Province, to train art teachers for the new educational system.¹⁰

Even prior to 1902 drawing and painting had already been offered in the earliest government schools, which had been established in the second half of the nineteenth century in recognition of the need to study Western languages, science, and technology. Western art was promoted in China as a branch of Western technology, called *xiyi* by Zhang Zhidong and his contemporaries in the Self-Strengthening Movement, a rubric that also included mathematics, pneumatics, electricity, mineralogy, medicine, physics, chemistry,

and other sciences.¹¹ Particularly in the military academies and engineering schools, the utility of Western drawing technique for drafting, cartography, and illustration was acknowledged. A case in point is the language school established in Shanghai in 1862, the *Tongwen guan* ("School of Combined Learning"), which became a college of Western studies, particularly foreign languages, science, and technology, by the mid-1860s. The school not only included drawing in its curriculum, but stressed its importance to the study and practice of technical subjects.¹² Subsequently, drawing and design became and have remained required courses in the curricula of technical and specialized schools.

In order to facilitate the introduction of Western science and technology in the second half of the nineteenth century, publications were translated into Chinese under the auspices of the Chinese government. A few books on the subject of drawing were also published in translation, with the illustrations faithfully copied, for example, *The Engineers' and Machinists' Drawing Book* by V. Leblond and J. Armengaud,¹³ *Aids to Model Drawing* by F. Richardson, and *Drawing Instruments*, all three translated by the Englishman John Fryer (1839-1928), who during his twenty-eight years with the Jiangnan Arsenal in Shanghai rendered one hundred and forty-three publications into Chinese.¹⁴

It is evident that Western painting method became welcome in China primarily for its mathematically precise rendering of the objective world. Whereas in previous centuries vanishing-point perspective, volumetric shading, and single-source light might have seemed merely exotic to the scholar-officials and court painters, at this time the same elements were seen to have practical and utilitarian value. As stated in the Chinese preface to *The Engineers' and Machinists' Drawing Book*, written in 1872, "drawing is the beginning and the foundation of making machines." Western drawing techniques were considered worthy of study and application because they would ultimately contribute to the progress of China.

Even though at this time the Chinese hardly distinguished drawing from drafting or illustration, it was not totally dissociated from the Western artistic tradi-

tion. Western art inevitably accompanied Western drawing techniques into China, even though its artistic significance was as yet unknown to Chinese artists. Evidence can be found in John Fryer's Chinese translation of *A Primer of Western Painting* (*Xihua churue*), which in six volumes introduces the principles and techniques of Western painting. As far as we know, this is the first comprehensive and systematic study of its kind ever available in the Chinese language. Writing in 1902, Xu Weize described this primer as having "detailed explanations in simple language and therefore [it is] easily understood by those who wish to learn."¹⁵ Another important publication was *Lun-hua qianshuo* ("First Lessons in Drawing"), translated by Shanying Jushi, which was published as a series in *Xiaohai yuebao* ("Children Monthly") beginning April 1875. The series propagated Western theories and practices of perspective, composition, color theory, drawing, and study from life. Under such circumstances Western art reached China's educated class and gained a new respectability and significance that paved its way to the art world of China.

To the reformers of the Self-Strengthening Movement of the late nineteenth century, technical and professional training based on the Western model was a means to halt foreign encroachment and to strengthen the Confucian state. The philosophical justification for its advocacy was formulated by Zhang Zhidong in 1890 as "Chinese learning for essential principles (*ti*) and Western learning for methods of application (*yong*)."¹⁶ To Zhang and his contemporaries, "there was indeed a fundamental structure of Chinese moral and philosophical values that gave continuity and meaning to the civilization. Holding on to that belief, China could then afford to adopt quickly and dramatically all sorts of Western practices, and to hire Western advisors."¹⁶

THE BEGINNING OF MODERN ART EDUCATION IN CHINA

The educational reforms of 1902 triggered sweeping changes—not only the abolition of the civil-service examination system and the transformation of the aims and methods of schooling in China, but also

the beginning of modern art education and the concomitant dissemination of Western art. The contents of the art education at this time ranged from descriptive drawing of simple shapes and models in primary schools to more complex geometric drawing, mechanical drawing, and freehand drawing (*zizai hua*) in the middle schools.¹⁷ In the specialized schools and technical institutes at the post-secondary level, the *tuhua* requirements were much more demanding, including additional training in foreshortening, perspective, engineering drawing, etcetera.¹⁸ The intention was to train the students to observe reality, to record it, and to make objects.

Since all of these curricula were foreign to the Chinese artistic tradition and were implemented on a scale without precedent in China's educational history, China had to import its first art teachers from Japan: the Japanese became the first agents of Western art in China. Mostly graduates of the Tokyo School of Art, they were stationed in major cities throughout the empire, including Beijing, Tianjin, Taiyuan, Xi'an, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Guangzhou, Fuzhou, and Chengdu.¹⁹ In the letters they wrote home, describing their life and work in China, we again note the emphasis on practical drawing and the surprisingly large number of courses being taught at this early period. The Chinese students were receptive to these new techniques, and their work showed steady improvement.²⁰

Many of the Japanese teachers returned home after 1912, partly because of the unstable political situation and partly because their places could be filled by returned students and by graduates of local normal schools. For example, the Chinese art educator Jiang Danshu (1885–1962), a graduate of the painting and handicraft section at the Liangjiang High Normal School, was hired by the influential Zhejiang Normal School in Hangzhou at about the time of the revolution to replace Yoshikae Shūji, the Japanese teacher of drawing.²¹

The person often credited with laying the foundation for art education in China was Li Ruiqing (1876–1920), who had visited Japan previously to study its educational development.²² Under his enlightened directorship the Liangjiang High

Normal School in Nanjing opened a painting and handicraft section in 1906, an innovation soon followed by the Beiyang Normal School in Baoding, Hebei. These two became the earliest institutions to train art teachers for the fast-growing number of schools throughout China.²³

The program at the Liangjiang High Normal School was modeled after the art department of Tokyo High Normal School. Students majored in painting and handicrafts and minored in music. In addition, they were required to attend classes in the theory of education for a total of forty-two class hours per week. By farsightedly including both Chinese and Western painting in the curriculum, Li initiated the coexistence of the two artistic traditions in the Chinese art academies which would develop in the following decades. It is evident, however, that instruction in the Western method of representation predominated, and that the emphasis on technical drawing or drafting reflected the importance attached to the practical applications of the Western method. The students took courses in pencil and charcoal drawing, design, plane and three-dimensional mechanical drawing, perspective, and various forms of projective geometry. Even though the students were also taught painting in oils and watercolors, because of the restrictive, pragmatic appraisal of Western painting, few recognized Western painting as an emotionally expressive art form. The Western art courses employed several Japanese teachers, including Shiomi Kyō and Watari Hironosuke, while Chinese painting of landscapes and flowers-and-birds required only a single teacher. Xiao Junxian (1865–1949), a prominent artist of the traditional school and the first traditional artist to be affiliated with a formal educational institution.²⁴

As a pioneer in the teaching of Western art, the painting and handicraft section at Liangjiang High Normal School was dependent on Japan not only for its teachers but also for reference books and for art supplies and teaching equipment such as plaster casts, paints, and brushes.²⁵ Two classes totaling sixty-nine students graduated after three-and-a-half years' training. As the first generation of

native-born and native-trained (though by foreign teachers) professional art teachers in China, who began to teach about 1910–1911, they collectively constituted the Western-style art movement in China, and the onset of their teaching careers in 1910–1911 signals the beginning of the movement.

Many of these graduates became prominent figures in the Chinese art world, notably Jiang Danshu, who pursued a long teaching career in various art schools. His publications included pioneering works on art history, artistic anatomy, and perspective.²⁶ Shen Qiqiao, another first-generation graduate of the program, founded in 1922 the Nanjing Art Academy (*Nanjing meishu zhuangmeng xuezhao*), the first comprehensive art school in Nanjing. Lü Fengzi (1885–1959) was the best known of the group, primarily because of his reforms in traditional painting.²⁷ Together with Jiang Danshu, Lü founded in 1911 in Shanghai an obscure atelier called Shenzhou Art Institute (*Shenzhou meishu she*) which preceded the Shanghai Art Academy (often incorrectly cited as China's first art school) by one year.²⁸ He subsequently returned to his birthplace, Danyang in Jiangsu Province, where in 1912 he founded the Zhengze Vocational School for Girls, whose art department was expanded into the Zhengze Art Academy in 1942.

The painting and handicraft section of Liangjiang High Normal School was terminated in the winter of 1910, and the school stopped operating at the fall of the Qing dynasty.²⁹ But in 1913 the school was reorganized by the Republican government into the National Nanjing High Normal School (*Guoli Nanjing gaodeng shifan xuezhao*), and the painting and handicraft section was reinstituted about 1915.³⁰ In 1927, under the leadership of Xu Beihong (1895–1953), the section developed into the prestigious art department of the National Central University (*Guoli Zhongyang darue*). Since 1952 it has been incorporated into the Nanjing Normal College (*Nanjing shifan xueyuan*), which celebrated the eightieth anniversary of the founding of the art department in 1982.

The zest for reform brought to an end the venerable civil-service examinations in 1905, three years after the comprehen-

sive plan for a nationwide educational system was initiated. They were replaced by examinations for the traditional titles of *juren* and *jinshi* that were open only to students returned from abroad and, later on, to graduates of high normal schools. That system was abolished at the fall of the Qing empire, but during the brief period of its enforcement, art (*yishu*) was among the subjects tested, and only graduates from the two normal schools with painting and handicraft sections were eligible. Jiang Danshu was among the few who participated in the examination, and he has left an interesting account of his experience.³¹ He was tested in both Chinese and Western painting. Comparatively speaking, traditional painting was quite easy, since Jiang was only asked to paint two branches of herbaceous peonies. Western painting was a different matter. He was required to do a watercolor painting from the following description: "This is night scene in which a gigantic battleship is floating on the sea. The distant shore is foggy and misty, and buildings can vaguely be seen." In addition, he was required to demonstrate skill in geometry by drawing hyperbolic and parabolic lines and explaining the principles behind them.

If these examination requirements can be used to gauge the training of the first generation of art teachers in China, they show a clear bias in favor of Western painting and drawing and an appreciation of the mathematical foundation of Western drawing method. The very specific instructions for the watercolor painting highlight the descriptive power of the Western medium; both the night scene and the battleship are subjects that traditional artists of the late Qing period had neither the inclination nor the training to depict.

Since 1902, before the Chinese art world was even aware of its potential influence, Western art had already attained a secure position in the modern educational system. At this point it may be appropriate to define the precise function assigned to the art curriculum in order to comprehend its place in the educational reforms of the nation. Due respect was given to developing practical skills with immediate vocational value for the youths of the nation.³² Moreover,



Figure 1. A Bridge in the Countryside. Reprinted from *A New Edition of Model Paintings for Middle Schools* (Shanghai, 1907).



Figure 2. Summer Landscape. Reprinted from *The Mustard-Seed Garden Painting Manual*. Lithographic edition (Shanghai, 1887–1888).

some practical skill in drawing was considered an indispensable adjunct to the study of mathematics, biology, geography, mechanics, woodwork, metalwork, etcetera, all of which were considered instrumental in turning China from a weak and backward empire into a strong and wealthy nation. Those aims are our key to understanding the emphasis on realistic Western art in the school curriculum from the establishment of China's first modern schools through the first half of the twentieth century.

In the proposed school regulations of 1903, however, we note emerging new attitudes to art education that would explain why, in the subsequent decades, some Chinese artists turned to Western art with the hope of reviving China's stagnant artistic tradition. That tradition, after centuries of conventionalized expressionistic (*xieyi*) representation, had lost its ability to depict the real and to describe precisely. Essential to exact description is the discipline of the eye and the hand,³³ or "eye-and-hand co-ordination,"³⁴ which not only involves the act of recording what is observed, but also cultivates keen observation of objective reality and the ability to grasp the concrete world of appearances.³⁵ Such are the qualities highly desirable in the future builders of China that the educational reforms hoped to instill with the introduction of a system modeled on Japan and the West.

The objectives of art education seem a bit high-sounding compared with its actual implementation. Because of the rapid increase in students at all levels—by 1909 there were already 52,918 schools, including 415 normal colleges, 254 technical schools, and 111 universities and special training schools³⁶—there were simply not enough qualified art teachers to meet the demand. Therefore the teaching of drawing and painting in the early twentieth century can only be described as primitive. Students usually copied from drawings done on blackboard or paper by the teacher.³⁷ Many resorted to the model books that since 1902 were published in substantial numbers as textbooks. Among the techniques illustrated were pencil drawing, Chinese brush painting and Western watercolor painting, and geometric and mechanical drawing; some of these copybooks had been translated and

adapted from Japanese.³⁸ *Xinzhuan zhongxue huarue linben* ("A New Edition of Model Paintings for Middle Schools"), published in 1907, was one such popular model book, from which students learned by copying (fig. 1). This practice is in essence no different from the centuries-old traditional practice of copying old master paintings or such woodblock-printed model books as the *Jiezi yuan huazhuan* ("The Mustard-Seed Garden Painting Manual"), which was first published in 1679 and reissued almost continuously thereafter as an instructional aid to painters (fig. 2). But the models provided differ radically: the landscape type-forms of the seventeenth-century book have been replaced in the twentieth-century manual by precisely rendered and visually correct scenes constructed according to the laws of perspective and chiaroscuro, representing a new perception of the real world. To what extent students and teachers of this time painted directly from nature or actually understood the principles of Western art, we can not readily determine.

The works produced in schools prior to 1911 have mostly not survived the ravages of time. A few found their way into periodicals such as *Jiaoyu zazhi* ("The Chinese Educational Review"). Illustrated here is a bouquet painted in watercolors by Chen Caicui, a student from Hunan Hanshou School for Girls (fig. 3). The young student has painstakingly recorded her visual impression of the flowers, paying special care to the details of the petals and the coloristic effect of light and shade. The expressiveness of calligraphic brushwork, highly regarded in traditional painting, is all but eliminated, and vestiges of her native tradition can only be seen in traces of brushwork in the daisies and in the colophon at top right. This painting could have been made directly from nature, but its hardened naturalism and apparent combination of foreign and native elements suggest that it was more likely copied from one of the model books which boasted of "using Western painting method to portray the idea of Chinese painting."³⁹

Since the launching of the new educational system in 1902, educational exhibitions of student achievements in various subjects were organized periodically,



Figure 3. *Chen Caicui. Bouquet of Flowers. 1911-1912.*



Figure 4. *Pages from Manual for Learning Pencil Drawing (Shanghai, 1907). From Zhu Boxiang and Chen Ruilin, Zhongguo xihua wushi nian—1898-1949 ("Fifty Years of Western-Style Painting in China") (Beijing: People's Art Press, 1989).*

and in these painting and drawing were invariably featured.⁴⁰ Similar displays formed part of the industrial expositions being held in large cities during the last years of the Qing empire. These educational and industrial exhibitions are perhaps the forerunners of the modern art exhibition in China, which would soon dominate all artistic activities and also develop into the most important channel of communication between artists and their public.

Very little information can be found concerning student or industrial exhibitions held prior to 1912. Yan Wenliang (1893-1988), one of the pioneers of the Western-Style Painting Movement, mainly active in Suzhou, recalled visiting the Nanyang Industrial Exposition, held in Nanjing in the autumn of 1908, as a representative of his school. In this exposition he showed a colored-pencil drawing of Suzhou railroad station.⁴¹ The date of this memorable event needs to be verified, because a more detailed and presumably reliable account of the Nanyang Industrial Exposition dates its opening in Nanjing to the fourth month of the *gengshu* year (1910).⁴² According to Jiang Danshu, who reminisced in 1928 about the artistic developments of the preceding twenty years, this exposition was the first of its kind ever sponsored by the government.⁴³ It had been preceded by a privately funded exposition held in Shanghai in 1908/9, in which art was one of the three main categories of exhibits, comprising contemporary calligraphy and Chinese-style painting, carved lacquer, embroidery, and, interestingly, oil paintings from Guangdong.⁴⁴

The Nanyang Industrial Exposition included a hall of fine arts whose mammoth scale was inspired by the international expositions in which China had begun to participate about the beginning of this century. In line with the commercial and industrial intent of this exposition, the fine arts display focused on handicrafts, and Jiang Danshu recalled a haphazard mixture of traditional painting, embroidery, and antiques.⁴⁵ Western art was displayed in the hall of education, where oil paintings; watercolors; pencil, charcoal, and brush drawings; and lacquer paintings were arranged alongside maps, charts, and mechanical and geo-

metric drawings. These works had been produced by students of all levels from all over China. It is quite evident that the art educators hardly distinguished between the utilitarian and technical functions of Western art and its aesthetic expression. This understanding—or misunderstanding—of Western art was clearly exemplified by a confused critic who complained about Western-style brush drawings being done by higher elementary-school students, because he considered them to be Chinese paintings in the detailed manner (*gongbi*) and thus useless and unsuitable for the young students.⁴⁶

The realism of Western art was also emphasized, particularly in connection with the portraits and drawings of flowers, fruits, and plaster casts submitted by the Tushan Wan Painting Workshop, an affiliate of the Tushan Wan Arts and Crafts Center in Shanghai. Founded by French Catholic missionaries in 1849 and moved to Tushan Wan in 1867, the Center was in fact an orphanage.⁴⁷ Various kinds of crafts were made at the Center, with the Painting Workshop, consisting of about forty apprentices, supplying whatever painting was needed. The products mainly served religious purposes, but masterpieces of Western secular painting were also copied and sold in China and abroad. The workshop, in operation until the 1940s, may be the earliest school where extensive and systematic teaching of Western art by Europeans took place. The Center also published painting manuals as teaching aids (fig. 4). Highly regarded by Xu Beihong (1895-1953) as "the cradle of Western-style painting in China," the workshop trained the pioneers of the Western-style art movement in Shanghai, including Zhou Xiang (1871-1934), Ding Song (1891-1972), Xu Yongqing (1880-1953), Hang Chiyong (1900-1947), and Zhang Chongren (1907-?).⁴⁸

The arrangement of works at the Nanyang Industrial Exposition aptly summed up attitudes of the preceding decade. Western art was a skill—to be taught in school because it was considered useful in industry and commerce. The Western art style adopted was basically realistic and academic. Few people in traditional art circles were even aware of its presence in China, and even fewer felt threatened by its intrusion.

CAI YUANPEI AND HIS PROPOSAL OF AESTHETIC EDUCATION IN 1912

In retrospect it can easily be deduced that the expressive or aesthetic aspects of art education remained largely dormant during this time, not unlike the situation in European schools during the same period.⁴⁹ The turning point came in China in 1912, when Cai Yuanpei became the first Minister of Education of the newly founded Republic. Cai Yuanpei, native of Shaoxing, Zhejiang, was an extraordinary figure in the modernization of China. He devoted his life to education, convinced that it was the true path to the building of a new society and a better China.⁵⁰ Moreover, because of his advocacy of aesthetic education, he has been regarded as the initiator as well as the key figure for the development of art and aesthetic education in China.⁵¹

In 1912 Cai published his now historic essay on the aims of education and their philosophical basis, among which we find aesthetic education (*meigan jiaoyu* or *meiyu*), together with universal military education, utilitarian education, moral education, and education for a world view. With this, Cai began his lifelong promotion of art and aesthetic education in China, thereby liberating Western art from the tenacious hold of utilitarianism to acquire new significance in the subsequent years. Moreover, his admiration for the art and culture of foreign countries as well as his emphasis on internationalism also inspired many young people to look to the West for new stimulus in art.

In view of its importance, we quote Cai's passage on aesthetic education:

Meigan is a conception combining beauty and solemnity and is a bridge between the phenomenal world and the world of reality. This concept was originated by Kant. . . . In the phenomenal world every person feels the passions of love, hatred, fear, surprise, happiness, anger, sadness, and pleasure, and these feelings vary according to the phenomena of [parting], reunion, life, death, disaster, good fortune, and catastrophe. As for the fine arts, such phenomena are used as sources of inspiration, and make those who look at representations of them have no other feeling than that of artistic appreciation. The blazing red volcano or a strong wind wrecking a boat are terrible and dreadful

*scenes, but when they appear in a painting they turn out to be worth exhibiting and appreciation When you feel related to actual phenomena neither by craving nor by loathing but are purely absorbed in artistic appreciation, then you will become a friend of the Creator and will be close to the conception of the world of reality. Therefore, if an educator wishes to lead the people from the phenomenal world to the conception of the world of reality, he must adopt aesthetic education.*⁵²

Without going into details of the philosophical and ethical framework of Cai's aesthetic philosophy,⁵³ much of which he acquired during the years spent at the University of Leipzig (1908–1911), we note in particular Cai's conception that art and its appreciation would contribute to the formation of a new perception of reality—a perception that he considered key to the transformation of Chinese society. In Cai's thinking, love of beauty could help to eliminate greed and prejudice, the obstacles to harmony in the material world. Therefore, according to Cai, art should ultimately replace religion as the spiritual cultivation of the individual and the unifying principle of society.⁵⁴

Though it has been said that Cai's emphasis on aesthetics merely reflects the traditional Confucian characterization of art and music as entities that help mold the human personality,⁵⁵ Cai's more immediate influence was Kantian philosophy, which emphasized the universal nature of the appreciation of beauty and the capacity of such appreciation to maintain a feeling of detachment.⁵⁶ He might also have been aware of the writings of Wang Guowei (1866–1927), a towering figure in classical studies and literary criticism. Wang was also interested in Western philosophy, and when he was with the Ministry of Education in 1906, he discussed aesthetic education for the development of feelings and emotions, alongside intellectual and moral education.⁵⁷ By this period in Chinese history, neither art nor music was any longer an agent of social uplift. Painting in particular had become an adjunct to the literati—their status symbol and diversion—and its mode of expression, mostly ink-play, no longer served the social functions

required by Cai. In line with the spirit of internationalism, Cai's concept of art had no national boundaries. The examples he cited (e.g., the erupting volcano or the shipwreck) steered Chinese artists toward themes and representations based on human experience more familiar to Western art. The publication of this essay in 1912 is another reason to consider that year the jumping-off point for the Western-style art movement. From this time on not only did Western art begin to acquire viability as a mode of artistic expression, but Chinese artists derived from Cai's thought a sense of social responsibility and of the importance of their work for China. Cai's influence on the Western-style art movement can hardly be exaggerated, and his work after 1912 merits a separate study.

RESPONSES TO CAI'S PROPOSAL OF AESTHETIC EDUCATION

Critics of Cai argued that aesthetic education could hardly solve the urgent problems of a nation in crisis, particularly one so poor and weak that even its survival as a nation was uncertain.⁵⁸ Moreover, the high ideals of aesthetic education were beyond the comprehension of the majority of Chinese nationals at that time and therefore were not practical.

In 1912, possibly inspired by Cai's proposal of aesthetic education, *Jiaoyu zazhi* ("The Chinese Educational Review") published, in three parts, the translation by Sunwu of *The Principles of Art Education* by a teacher of psychology identified only as Poluoxie.⁵⁹ Further researches will be needed to identify the author of this book, which occupies the unique position of the first book-length work on art education ever translated into Chinese. The book articulates, in greater and more elaborate detail, many of the ideas put forth by Cai Yuanpei.

This three-part series introduced the Chinese to many new ideas about art, especially the psychological study of visual perception and artistic response. It distinguished the aims of science from those of art, the latter being an aesthetic transformation of reality that would cap-

ture the essence and the spirit of nature. The writer also asserted that aesthetic appreciation entails a feeling of detachment from reality, that aesthetic experience affords spiritual repose in a realm of the ideal. In the concluding paragraph of this series the author drew a parallel between art and religion, possibly inspiring Cai Yuanpei's proposal of 1917 to replace religion with aesthetic education. In fact, Poluoxie's ideals—of a transcendental realm of completeness and perfection attainable through art and of the power of aesthetic education to harmonize human energy and to cultivate personal character—show such an affinity with Cai's aesthetic thought as to make it highly likely that Cai was familiar with this publication.

Despite criticism of his idealistic philosophy of education, Cai Yuanpei made every effort to see his ideas realized. His aims were reflected in the revised course description for the secondary-school art curriculum, which appeared in September 1912: "The essential aims of the art courses are thorough observation of the subject to be represented and the ability to draw and paint freely. Further aims are to train artistic conception and to cultivate aesthetic feeling."⁶⁰ At the university level, archaeology, art history, and aesthetics were introduced into the curriculum as elective courses in 1913, inaugurating the systematic study of art as an academic discipline in modern China.⁶¹

In 1912 Cai established the Social Education Office to promote cultural education in society. Its activities were divided between two sections. The responsibilities of the first section included art, culture, and science, specifically the oversight of museums, libraries, galleries, exhibitions, literature, music, drama, survey of antiquities, etcetera.⁶² To take charge of this section Cai appointed none other than Lu Xun (1881–1936), who had joined the Ministry of Education in that year. Apart from his almost legendary stature as writer, thinker, and revolutionary, Lu Xun was also destined to be a key figure in the artistic conflicts of modern



Figure 5. Photograph of Li Shutong (left) and Zeng Yannian (right), in costume after appearing in a play in Tokyo, 1907.

China. His artistic activities, particularly those connected with the modern woodcut movement, have been well documented by a vast number of studies.⁶³

In Lu Xun, Cai found a sympathetic colleague to carry out programs of social education in which art figured prominently.⁶⁴ For example, in 1912 the Ministry organized a summer lecture series on politics, economics, culture, and art, to propagate new knowledge among educators.⁶⁵ Lu Xun was more than willing to deliver a series of four lectures on art. He had become deeply interested in art, and his student days in Japan (1902–1909) had brought him into contact with Western art.⁶⁶ The contents of his lectures, called “Brief Discussions on Art” were not recorded, but their essence may be preserved in a brief essay published the following year. Entitled “Draft Opinions on the Propagation of Art,” this essay was remarkable in that it reflected predominantly Western conceptions of the classification, function, and social significance of art. In fact, the very term for art in the essay, *meishu*, was a Chinese neologism expressing a Western concept.⁶⁷ Recognizing the cultural, ethical, and economic functions of art in a society, Lu Xun proposed a program to disseminate art through a system of museums, concert halls, theaters, exhibitions, and literary gatherings, as well as through the preservation of ancient sites and monuments and the collection of folk literature.

It is not the purpose of this essay to chronicle or to analyze the artistic activities of Lu Xun, but to highlight his enthusiastic support for Cai’s call for aesthetic education in 1912. His summer lectures, the first instance of public lectures devoted to art, initiated a channel of communication with the general public which members of the new art movement would soon utilize in spreading their gospel of Western art. Moreover, although his proposals might seem idealistic in light of the unstable political situation at that time, they pointed the directions that later generations would follow in their efforts to promote art and culture in society. By 1937 146 museums and galleries

had been established.⁶⁸ Cultural institutions multiplied even more rapidly after 1949 due to government support, and a survey conducted in 1981 shows the proliferation of such cultural establishments in every major city and county all over China.⁶⁹

RETURN OF ART STUDENTS FROM ABROAD

In 1872 the Qing government began sending students to the United States to study Western learning; beginning in 1875, the study-abroad destinations included Europe and, in 1896, Japan. In the first decade of the present century there were tens of thousands of Chinese students in Japan, 12,909 in 1906 alone.⁷⁰ Yet in the same period few Chinese were looking to the West or Japan for fresh artistic insights. The situation would change in the twenties and thirties, when aspiring young artists flocked to Paris, Tokyo, and other artistic centers of the world to study Western art, and on their return to their native land constituted a direct impetus for the development of the Western-style art movement.

An exception to the general indifference to Western art during this early period was Li Shutong (1880–1942) who, together with Zeng Yannian (d. 1921) was the earliest Japanese-trained artist in Western painting (fig. 5). Both were listed as having graduated from the Tokyo School of Fine Arts (*Tokyo bijutsu gakkō*) in 1911,⁷¹ though they may have returned to their homeland earlier, as Li Shutong was recorded as teaching at the Tianjin Technical School (*Tianjin gongye zhuanmen xuetang*) in 1910.⁷² Upon his return to China Zeng Yannian, also known as Zeng Xiaogu, soon left for the remote province of Sichuan, his ancestral home, where from 1915 he taught art at the Chengdu High Normal School (*Chengdu gaodeng shifan xuetiao*).⁷³ Because Chengdu was so remote from China’s artistic centers and also because he died young in 1921,⁷⁴ Zeng had little impact on the Western-style art movement, whereas Li Shutong was renowned as the first Chinese student to have received thorough training in West-



Figure 6. Li Shutong (1880–1942). Study of a Nude. Possibly before 1910. Oil.

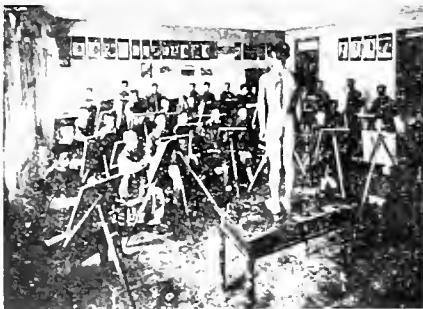


Figure 7. Photograph of the first life drawing class at Zhejiang First Normal School, 1913.

ern art in Japan.⁷⁶ Li devoted himself to art and art education for almost a decade and was tremendously influential in promoting Western art, music, and drama in China. He became a monk in 1918, taking the Buddhist name Hongyi, and thereafter devoted himself mainly to Buddhist and philosophical studies.⁷⁶

Li Shutong is a legendary figure in modern Chinese art history. Born in Tianjin of a wealthy and scholarly family, he received a typical classical education, but he was also aware of the new ideas being broached by Kang Youwei (1858–1927), Liang Qichao (1873–1929), and Cai Yuanpei. He participated in the Hundred Days Reform of 1898, and when it was suppressed had to flee from Tianjin to Shanghai. By the time he left for Japan in 1905, he had already made a name for himself as an accomplished poet, painter, calligrapher, and seal engraver, i.e., an artist par excellence of the traditional school. His interest in Western art may have been nurtured during his years in Shanghai. Disheartened by the humiliating defeats of the Qing empire and by the sudden death of his mother, Li left for Japan, where some of his old reformist acquaintances who had fled to Japan in 1898 were still living.

When Li enrolled at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts in 1906, Kuroda Seiki (1866–1924) was its head. Returning from Paris in 1893, Kuroda practiced a style of oil painting that combined the detailed naturalism of the academic school with early Impressionism.⁷⁷ Li threw himself into his studies, even employing his own models so as to have more time for painting. His canvases reveal that he learned his lessons well, and confirm Feng Zikai's (1898–1975) comment that his teacher's style was realism tinged with Impressionist brushwork.⁷⁸ He was one of the few Chinese artists who completely mastered this foreign idiom. Yet what elevated him over his fellow artists was not only his technical competence but the quality of spirituality and mystery in his paintings (fig. 6). It was perhaps these aspects of his nature that led him to become a Buddhist monk in 1918.

Though Li Shutong supposedly returned to China and a teaching position in a technical school in 1910, his contribution to the Western-style art movement really began in 1912 when he joined the Zhejiang First Normal School (*Zhejiang diyi shifan xuexiao*) in Hangzhou as teacher of art and music in the school's newly opened painting and handicraft department. That department came about through the efforts of the director of the school, Jing Hengyi (1877–1938), who was a graduate of Tokyo High Normal School and later enjoyed moderate success as a traditional painter.

Brief as it was, Li's seven-year career as art instructor was to have lasting impact on the spread of Western art in China. In contrast to the general practice in art education, which was to copy teachers' paintings or reproductions in textbooks published specifically for that purpose,⁷⁹ Li taught his students to draw directly from plaster casts and still lifes, just as he himself had been taught at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts.⁸⁰ He also took his students outdoors, to seek inspiration in the scenic beauty of West Lake. Then in 1913 he introduced painting from the nude model as the basic training method in Western painting, and a photograph of this historic event shows the first life class of about thirty students (fig. 7).⁸¹ At about the same time he also became the first Chinese artist to explore modern woodcut techniques, together with his students and colleagues at the Zhejiang First Normal School.⁸²

In sum, by adopting the systematic and direct training methods that he had learned while studying Western art in Japan, Li taught his students to use their eyes and their minds. He thereby consolidated the reforms initiated in 1906 at the Liangjiang High Normal School under the tutelage of Japanese art teachers. Li possessed to a remarkable degree the ability to communicate his enthusiasm for painting and other arts to his students, some of whom became leading figures in the art world in subsequent decades. A good example is Feng Zikai, whose choice of an artistic career resulted directly

from Li's recognition and encouragement of his talents.⁸³ Li's contribution to early art education in modern China is at least as significant as his achievement in Western-style art. Both those accomplishments were overshadowed by his fame as an austere Buddhist monk and a calligrapher.

Although programs to send students to study in Europe and the United States had been initiated in 1875 and 1872, respectively, these programs did not begin to affect the study of art until 1909. In 1909 we encounter the name of Li Zuhong (1886–1942), better known as Li Yishi, who was studying science and fine arts, respectively, at the University of Glasgow and the Glasgow Academy of Art.⁸⁴ About 1912–1913 Wu Fading (1883–1924) and Li Chaoshi (1893–1971) left for study at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Li Tiefu (1869–1952) went to England in 1887, becoming the first Chinese student to enroll in a formal program of fine arts in the Arlington School of Art. His subsequent experience in New York, at the Academy of Fine Arts, the Art Students' League, and the Academy of Design, gave him exposure to the Western academic tradition unequaled by his contemporaries in China.⁸⁵ About 1905 the National Art Academy, Mexico City, an unlikely place to find a Chinese student, enrolled Feng Gangbo (1884–1984). He later spent ten years at the Art Students' League of New York, where Li Tiefu was a fellow student.⁸⁶

All of these artists encountered the academic tradition of Western art and acquired a firm technical foundation. By returning to China after their studies overseas, they became protagonists of the Western-style art movement as well as mainstays of the burgeoning art education system in China. But since it was not until 1918 that the first of this group completed their studies, the innovative teaching of Li Shutong at Zhejiang First Normal School, beginning in 1912, was all the more significant for the development of Western art in China.

ART EDUCATION AND THE WESTERN-STYLE ART MOVEMENT: AN ANALYSIS

In the foregoing pages we have seen the close relationship between the beginning of the Western-style art movement and reforms in education in the late Qing and early Republican periods. Indeed, the inclusion of art subjects in the school curriculum since 1902 has had far-reaching influence even to the present day—an influence that warrants further analysis.

First of all, by occupying a place in the modernized educational system, art acquired an importance not enjoyed in the traditional educational process. Traditional education was narrowly focused on training for the civil-service examinations, in which the visual arts played no part.⁸⁷ Furthermore, the premodern social tradition defined painting as a pastime of cultivated literati amateurs, along with poetry, music, chess, and calligraphy; under the influence of this amateur ideal, any sign of professionalism was taken as a sign of commercialism and was therefore disdained if not condemned. Wang Yachen (1894–1983), in surveying the development of art education in modern China, went so far as to describe premodern education in village schools as anti-art.⁸⁸ He recalled his own childhood in such a school, when he and his schoolmates were whipped for drawing flowers or animals and for making clay figurines. Feng Zikai also gave a vivid account of learning to draw stealthily, behind the tutor's back.⁸⁹ The establishment of modern schools, with art as part of the curriculum, changed the situation completely, and therefore should be considered a watershed in the history of art education in China.

Secondly, because the modern educational system developed out of the wholesale importation of Western learning, Western modes of artistic representation prevailed in the schools and their utilitarian aspects were emphasized. Only since 1912, when Cai Yuanpei proposed his concepts of aesthetic education, has Western art assumed aesthetic significance in China's educational system. It

was the creation of a comprehensive and compulsory school system that helped to spread Western drawing and painting methods throughout the empire within the short span of a few years, reaching even to Gansu University on China's remote Inner Asian Frontier.⁹⁰ Formal education exposed China's young people to Western art at an early age. Many became sympathetic to this new art form and elected to study it further in the art schools and academies that began to flourish after the founding of the Republic. For the Western-style art movement in China, this was certainly advantageous. But advocates of Western art in the lower schools did not anticipate that the emphasis on Western art, especially its practical and vocational aspects, would produce generations of Chinese youths with hardly any knowledge of their own artistic heritage or any capacity for its appreciation. Considered to be superior to Western art and yet too far detached from reality, traditional art came to be thought of as a subject for advanced study, the proper domain of specialists; Western art, realistic and therefore easily comprehensible, was more appropriate for popular education.⁹¹ Such misconceived ideas deprived traditional painting of its links with the people and threatened its survival. By 1935 the domination of the school curricula by Western-style art was being outspokenly opposed by traditional artists, who publicly proposed to the Ministry of Education that Chinese painting should be taught in primary and secondary schools.⁹²

The third locus of influence is basically financial: the school curriculum created a great demand for art teachers, which in turn provided direct impetus for the proliferation of art schools, whose graduates, mostly in Western painting, found livelihood as art teachers and art educators, and in that capacity attracted yet more adherents to the Western-style art movement. In addition, art education afforded modern Chinese artists a new dimension of professionalism that set them apart from their traditional counterparts and at the same time raised

them above the ranks of plebeian folk craftsmen. A new social status—modern artist—was already in the making in the early years of the twentieth century, and the artists whom we have mentioned might be considered forerunners of “the modern Chinese artist.”

The years before the founding of the Republic have been described by some historians as a period of pre-emergent darkness in the history of the Western-style art movement in China.⁹³ Indeed, few people in China's traditional art world were even aware of the movement's existence. It was kept safely within the sphere of education, where, as we have seen, it struck roots for its future development. The year 1912 proved to be a watershed for the movement: in that year Cai Yuanpei published his theory of aesthetic education; Lu Xun, at the Ministry of Education, proclaimed the social function of art; Li Shutong, returned from studying in Japan, began teaching Western art according to Western methods in Hangzhou; and the first generation of art teachers had begun to teach in various schools the year before. Significant events were also occurring outside the government educational system in 1912, notably the founding of the first academy of art in Shanghai (*Shanghai tuhua meishu yuan*) by Liu Haisu (1896-1994) and his friends. Their manifesto can be interpreted as launching the Western-style art movement and giving it character and direction:

Firstly, we must develop the indigenous art of the East and study the mysteries of Western art;

Secondly, we want to fulfill our responsibility of promoting art in a society that is callous, apathetic, desiccated, and decaying. We shall work for the rejuvenation of Chinese art, because we believe art can save present-day Chinese society from confusion and arouse the general public from their dreams;

*Thirdly, we are far from knowledgeable, yet we are confident of our sincerity to study and promote [art].*⁹⁴

Liu Haisu was to become one of the most influential artists and art educators of twentieth-century China. Under his leadership the Shanghai Art Academy developed into a thriving center of modernist trends in Western art and a symbol of artistic freedom.

The year 1912 was also marked by the publication of the first popular art periodical, *Zhenxiang huabao* ("The True Record Illustrated Magazine"), by the brothers Gao Jianfu (1879–1951) and Gao Qifeng (1889–1933), who, together with Chen Shuren (1884–1948), were the founders of the Lingnan school in Guangdong, whose purpose was to reform traditional Chinese painting. All these developments publicized Western art as an aesthetic and expressive medium as well as a powerful tool to reform Chinese society. Occurring together in 1912, they launched the Western-style art movement, which would ultimately change the course of Chinese art in the twentieth century.

NOTES

1. Chen Baoyi, "Yanghua zai Zhongguo liuchuan de guocheng" ("The Spread of Western-Style Painting in China"), *Shanghai yishu yuekan* ("Shanghai Art Monthly"), 1942; reprint *Yishujia* ("The Artist"), vol. 35 (April 1978), pp. 19–41.
2. Chang Shuhong, "Zhongguo xin yishu yundong guoqu de cuowu yu jinhou de zhanwang" ("The Past Mistakes of the Chinese New Art Movement and Its Future Prospects"), *Yifeng* ("Art Wind"), vol. 2, no. 8 (1 August 1934), pp. 33–44.
3. Xu Xinzhi, "Zhongguo meishu yundong de zhanwang" ("Prospects of Art Movements in China"), *Shahun yuekan* ("Siren Monthly"), vol. 1, no. 1 (16 June 1930), pp. 22–23.
4. Osvald Siren, *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles*, 7 vols. (New York: Ronald Press, 1956–58), vol. 5, pp. 90, 226. See also Michael Sullivan, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), p. 85. For different viewpoints, see James Cahill, *The Compelling Image: Nature and Style in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Painting* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982) and Mayching Kao, "European Influences in Chinese Art. Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," in *China and Europe: Images and Influences in Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Thomas H.C. Lee (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1991), pp. 251–303.
5. See Carl L. Crossman, *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 1991), chaps. 1–8.
6. See Zhang Yanfeng, *Lao yuefenpai guanggao hua* ("Old Calendar Paintings for Advertising"), 3 vols. (Taipei: Hansheng Magazine, 1994).
7. Certain authors have dated the emergence of the Western-style art movement as late as 1914–1915 (see Chen Baoyi, "The Spread of Western-Style Painting in China," p. 20), but the movement emerged with Cai's proclamation of its principles.
8. Ssu-yu Teng and John K. Fairbank, *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey, 1839–1923* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 166. For the educational reforms initiated by Zhang Zhidong, see Tu Zuo Zhou, "Jin bainian lai Zhongguo xin jiaoyu zhi fazhan" ("The Development of China's New Education in the Last Hundred Years") in Tu et al., *Jin Bainian lai zhi Zhongguo jiaoyu* ("Education in China in the Last Hundred Years") (Hong Kong: Longmen Book Company, 1969); William Ayers, *Chang Chih-tung and Educational Reform in China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 196–224.
9. Shu Xinchang, *Jindai Zhongguo jiaoyu shi ziliao* ("Source Materials on the History of Modern Chinese Education"), 3 vols. (Beijing: People's Press, 1961), vol. 2, pp. 408–9, 498–500, 511–15, 540–43, 682, 762.
10. Jiang Danshu, "Woguo wushi nian lai yishu jiaoyu shi zhi yiye" ("A Page in the History of Art Education in China in the Past Fifty Years"), *Meishu yanjiu* ("Journal of Studies in

Art"), vol. 1 (1959), pp. 30–31.

11. Chen Qitian, *Jindai Zhongguo jiaoyu shi* ("History of Education in Modern China"), rev. ed. (Taipei: Taiwan China Book Company, 1969), p. 89. Also consult Qu Lihe, *Qingmo xiyi jiaoyu sichao* ("The Tide of Education in Western Science and Technology in the Late Qing Period") (Taipei: Academic Writings Grants Committee of China, 1971).
12. Knight Biggerstaff, *The Earliest Modern Government Schools in China* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1961), p. 171.
13. Translated into *Qixiang xianzhen*, 4 *juan* of text and 1 *juan* of plates (Shanghai, 1872), *Huaxing tushuo* (Shanghai, 1885?), and *Huaqi xuzhi* (Shanghai, 1888?) respectively.
14. Adrian A. Bennett, *John Fryer: The Introduction of Western Science and Technology into Nineteenth-century China*, Harvard East Asian Monographs, no. 24 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967).
15. Xu Weize, ed., *Dongxi xue shulu* ("A Bibliography for Study of East and West"), 4 *juan* plus 2 suppl. *juan* by Gu Xieguang (1902).
16. Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), p. 225.
17. Shu Xincheng, *Source Materials*, vol. 2, pp. 408, 498–99.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 540–42, 682, 762.
19. Tsuruta Takeyoshi, "Seimatsu Minkoku shoki no bijutsu kyoiku" ("Art Education in the late Qing and Early Republican Period"), *Byutsu kenkyu* ("Journal of Art Studies"), vol. 365, pp. 1–38. See in particular the list of Japanese art teachers in China, pp. 16–18.
20. See letters written by Iwataki Tamaro and Maruno Yutaka, published in *Koyukai geppo* ("Monthly Newsletter of the Alumni Association"), vol. 7, no. 1 (30 September 1908), p. 19, and vol. 8, no. 1 (1909), respectively.
21. Pan Tianshou, "Yuwai huihua liuru zhongtu kaolue" ("A Study of the Introduction of Painting from Abroad"), appendix in *Zhongguo huihua shi* ("History of Chinese Painting"), 2nd ed. (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1936), p. 246.
22. Wang Yachen, "Xiandai Zhongguo yishu jiaoyu gaiguan" ("Survey of Art Education in Modern China"), *Xuehu* ("Academia"), vol. 2 (December 1940), p. 147. Li Ruiqing, hao Mei'an, Native of Linchuan, Jiangxi Province. Member of Hanlin since 1895. In addition to his contribution to modern education, Li was a noted painter and calligrapher of the traditional school. He moved to Shanghai at the fall of the Qing dynasty. Adopting the alternative name of Qing Daoren, he began to earn his living by selling painting and calligraphy. Zhang Daqian (1899–1983), the celebrated master of modern Chinese painting, became his pupil in 1919.
23. Jiang Danshu, "A Page in the History of Art Education," pp. 30–31.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Pan Tianshou, "Introduction of Painting from Abroad," p. 246. See also "Jiangsu ziyiju diaocha Liangjiang shifan xuetao baogao"

("A Report on the Investigation on Liangjiang Normal School Conducted by the Jiangsu Consultative Bureau"), *Jiaoyu zazhi* ("The Chinese Educational Review"), vol. 3, no. 3 (10 March 1911).

26. Jiang Shukai, "Ji fuqing Jiang Danshu de yishu jiaoyu shengya" ("Notes on My Father Jiang Danshu's Career in Art Education"), *Meishu* ("Art"), vol. 1, pp. 44–46, 43 (20 January, 1983). Jiang's publications include *Meishu shi* ("The History of Art") (Shanghai, 1917), *Yishu jiepou xue* ("Anatomy for Art") (Shanghai, 1930), *Toushi xue* ("Perspective") (Shanghai, 1933), and *Yiyon jiepou xue sanshiba jiang* ("Thirty-eight Lectures on Artistic Anatomy") (Shanghai, 1958).
27. See Lü Fengzi, *Zhongguo huafa yanjiu* ("Studies in Chinese Painting Method") (Shanghai: People's Art Press, 1961) and *Lü Fengzi huaji* ("Collected Paintings of Lü Fengzi") (Shanghai: People's Art Press, 1960).
28. Jiang Jianfei, "Zhongguo Renwu hua de gailiang zhe—Lü Fengzi" ("Lü Fengzi: Reformer of Chinese Figure Painting"), in *Zhongguo minchu huajia* (Chinese Painters of the Early Republican Period") (Taipei: Artist Press, [1978]).
29. "Fu Liangjiang shifan jianbu da ziyiju han" ("Reply from the Director of the Liangjiang Normal School to the Consultative Bureau"), *Jiaoyu zazhi*, vol. 3, no. 3 (10 March 1911), p. 36.
30. Jiang Danshu, "A Page in the History of Art Education," p. 31.
31. *Ibid.*
32. Shu Xincheng, "Source Materials," vol. 2, p. 436.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 421.
34. Herbert Read, *Education Through Art*, reprint (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), p. 209.
35. Shu Xincheng, "Source Materials," vol. 2, pp. 421, 436.
36. Chen Qitian, *History of Education in Modern China*, p. 49.
37. Wu Mengfei, "Wusi yundong qianhou de meishu jiaoyu huiyi pianduan" ("Fragments of Reminiscences on Art Education Before and After the May Fourth Movement"), *Meishu yanjiu* ("Art Research"), vol. 3 (1959), pp. 42–46.
38. "Jiaoke shu zhi fakan gaiguan" ("Survey of the Publication of Textbooks"), originally published in 1934, in Zhang Jinglu, *Zhongguo jindai chubanshi* ("Historical Materials on the Publishing [Enterprises] in Modern China"), 2 vols. (Beijing: China Book Company, 1957), vol. 1, pp. 219–53. Examples found in Zhang Jinglu's study (pp. 117–18) include *Xinrihuatie* ("New Model Paintings"), 5 vols., and *Qianbi xinxi huatie* ("New Model Drawings in Pencil"), 4 vols., both compiled by Ding Baoshu, and *Qianmaobi xihuate* ("Model Drawings in Pencil and Brush"), 8 vols. All three sets were published in 1902. In addition to works cited in Zhang Jinglu's authoritative compendia, the Commercial Press of Shanghai also published many series of art textbooks, including the popular *Xinzhuan zhongxue huaxue luben* ("A New Edition of Model Paintings for Middle

- Schools"), 8 vols., published in 1907 and in its twelfth edition by 1923. Before 1902 Nanyang University had published *Tuhua jianben* ("Model Drawings and Paintings"), translated and adapted from textbooks used in Japanese primary schools. See Xu Weize, "Bibliography for Study of East and West," vol. 4, p. 8b.
39. "Xuebu shending zhongxue jiaokeshu tiyao" ("Abstracts of Textbooks for Middle Schools Approved by the Ministry of Education"), *Jiaoyu zazhi*, vol. 1, no. 2 (25 February 1909), pp. 16–17.
40. Three such exhibition are recorded, two in 1909 and one in 1910. See *Duyici zhongguo jiaoyu nianjian* ("The First Chinese Education Almanac"), reprinted in *Zhongguo shiliao congkan* ("Collection of Historical Materials of China"), ser. 1 (Taipei, 1971), vol. 5, p. 168.
41. Qian Bochong, "Yan Wenliang xiansheng nianpu" ("A Chronological Biography of Yan Wenliang"), in Lin Wenxia, *Yan Wenliang* (Shanghai: Xuelin Press, 1982), p. 158.
42. Beginning in 1909, when the Nanyang Industrial Exposition was first proposed by Duan Fang, then the governor of Liangjiang, this major event received fairly detailed reporting in *Dongfang zazhi* ("Eastern Miscellany"); see vols. 6 and 7 (1909–1910).
43. Jiang Danshu, "Yishu niannian hua liangtou" ("Art Now and Twenty Years Ago"), *Yabohuo* ("Apollo"), (January 1929), pp. 528–30.
44. *Dongfang zazhi*, vol. 5, no. 5 (25 May 1908), pp. 38–41.
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48. Xu Beihong, "Xin yishu yundong zhi huigu yu qianzhan" ("Review of the New Art Movement and Its Future Prospects"), originally published in 1943, reprinted in *Xu Beihong yishu wenji* ("Collected Essays of Xu Beihong"), 2 vols. (Taipei: Artist Press, 1987), vol. 1, p. 429.
49. Read, pp. 212–14.
50. See William J. Duiker, *Ts'ai Yuan-p'ei: Educator of Modern China* (University Park and New York: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977). Also Douglas Spelman, *Ts'ai Yuan-p'ei: 1868–1923* (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University Press, 1973); and Nie Zhenbin, "Cai Yuanpei de meiyu sixiang" ("Cai Yuanpei's Thought on Aesthetic Education"), *Meizue* ("Aesthetics"), vol. 3 (June 1981), pp. 61–78.
51. Shu Xincheng, *Jindai Zhongguo jiaoyu sixiang shi* ("The History of Educational Thought in Modern China") (Shanghai: China Book Company, 1929) p. 155.
52. Cai Yuanpei, "Duiyu jiaoyu fangzhen de yijian" ("My Views on the Aims of Education"), first published in 1912 in *Jiaoyu zazhi*, reprinted in *Cai Yuanpei xiansheng quanji* ("The Complete Works of Cai Yuanpei") (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1968), pp. 452–59. Translation

is quoted from Teng and Fairbank, p. 237.

53. William J. Duiker, "The Aesthetic Philosophy of Ts'ai Yuan-p'ei," *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 22, no. 4 (October 1972), pp. 385-401.

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55. Duiker, *Ts'ai Yuan-p'ei: Educator*, p. 47.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

57. Shu Xingchen, *Source materials*, vol. 3, p. 1008.

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62. Sun Ying, *Lu Xun zai jiaoyubu* ("Lu Xun at the Ministry of Education") (Tianjin: People's Press, 1979), pp. 16-18.

63. For example: Chen Yanqiao, *Lu Xun yu muke* ("Lu Xun and Woodcuts") (Shanghai: Kaiming Book Company, 1949); Zhang Wang, ed., *Lu Xun lun meishu* ("Lu Xun on Art") (Beijing: People's Art Press, 1982); Wang Guanquan, *Lu Xun yu meishu* ("Lu Xun and Art") (Shanghai: People's Art Press, 1979); *Huiyi Lu Xun de meishu huodong* ("Reminiscences of the Artistic Activities of Lu Xun") (Beijing: People's Art Press, 1981); Zhang Guangfu, ed., *Lu Xun meishu lunji* ("Collected Writings on Art by Lu Xun") (Kunming: Yunnan People's Press, 1982). For an account in English, see Shirley Sun, "Lu Hsün and the Chinese Woodcut Movement: 1929-1936" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1974).

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80. Feng Zikai, "Talking to Our Young People," pp. 40-41.

81. Wu Mengfei dated this photograph to 1914.

82. Lin Shuzhong, "Jindai xiyang huihua de shuru yu Zhongguo zaoqi de meishu liuxuesheng" ("The Importation of Western Art into Modern China and the Early Art Students Abroad"), *Nanyi xuebao* ("Journal of the Nanjing Academy of Art"), vol. 1 (March 1981), pp. 34-40.

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92. Yu Jianhua, "Zhongxiaoxue tuhua ke yishou guohua yi" ("A Proposal to Teach Chinese Painting in the Art Curricula of Primary and Middle Schools"), *Guohua yuekan* ("Chinese Painting Monthly"), vol. 1, no. 5 (March 1935), pp. 10-14; vol. 1, no. 6 (April 1935), pp. 42-44; vol. 1, no. 7 (May 1935), pp. 60-62.

93. Wang Yachen, "Art Education in Modern China," pp. 20-21.

94. Zhonghua renmin gongheguo wenhuabu jiaoyu keji, ed., *Zhongguo gaodeng yishu yuanxiao jianshi ji* ("Collected Concise Histories of the Chinese Art Academies") (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts Press, 1991), p. 435.

61. **Xu Beihong** (1895–1953)
Sound of the Flute
1926
Oil on canvas; 79 x 38 cm
Xu Beihong Memorial, Beijing



62. Guan Zilan (Violet Kwan; 1903–1986)

Portrait of Miss L.

1929

Oil on canvas; 90 x 75 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



63. Chang Yu (Sanyu; 1901-1966)

Acrobat

Undated [1930s]

Oil on paperboard, mounted on panel;

41.5 x 38 cm

Collection of Mr. Martin Lee, Taipei



64. **Pang Xunqin** (1906–1985)

Son of the Earth

1934

Watercolor study; 73 x 45 cm

Pang Xunqin Memorial Museum,
Changshu



65. **Qiu Ti** (1906–1958)

Still Life

Undated (1931–1933)

Oil on canvas; 44 x 53 cm

Collection of Pang Jiun, Taipei



66. Zhao Shou (b. 1912)
Let's Jump
1934
Oil on canvas; 78 x 93 cm
Guangzhou Art Museum



67. Zhao Shou (b. 1912)

Color

1934

Oil on canvas; 92 x 78 cm

Guangzhou Art Museum



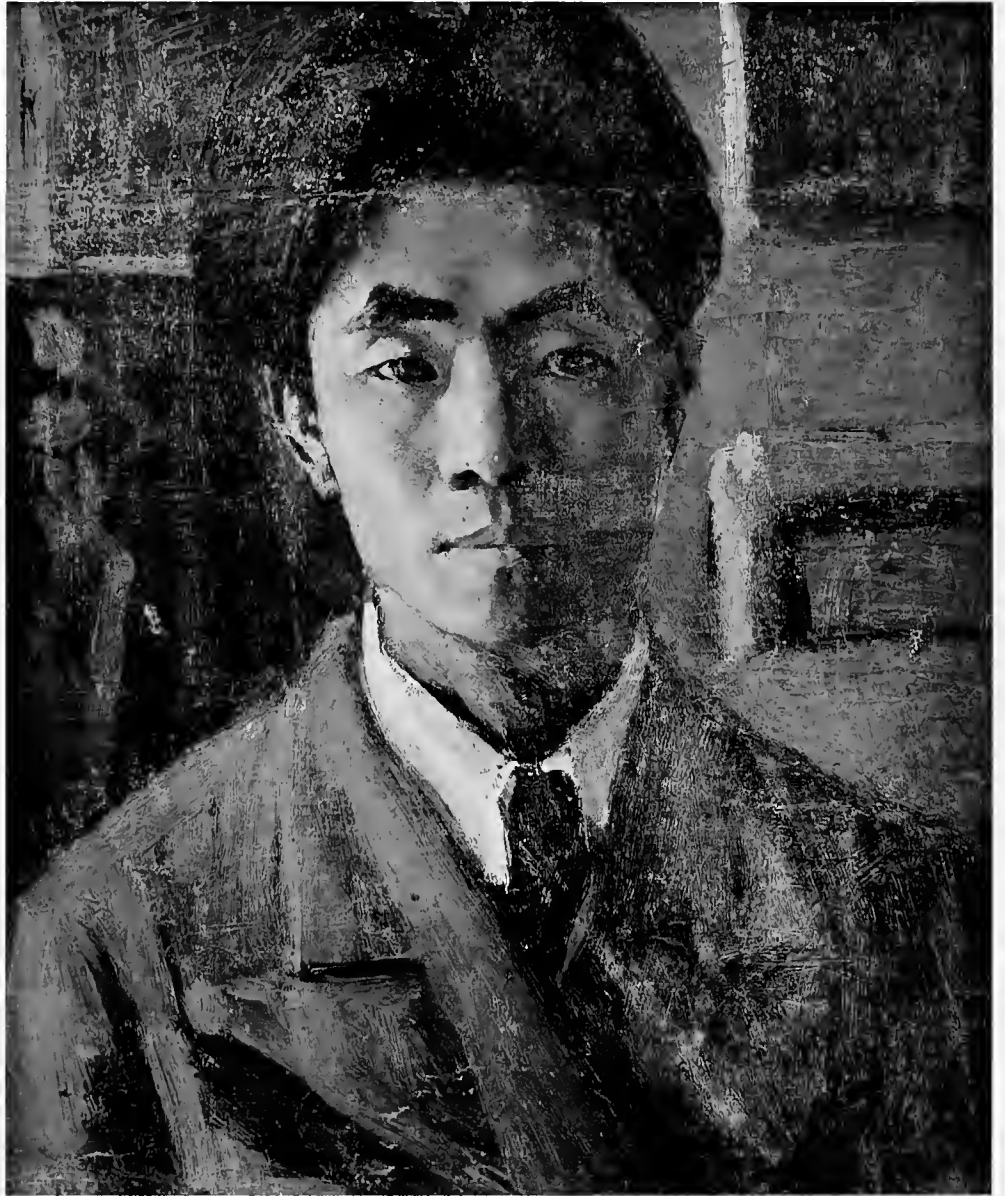
68. **Sha Qi** (b. 1914)

Self-portrait

Undated

Oil on canvas; 59 x 49 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



69. Pan Yuliang (1902–1977)

Self-Portrait

1945

Oil on canvas; 73.5 x 60 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



70. **Chen Qincuo** (1906–1988)
Flowers Above the Trenches
 1940
 Oil on canvas; 45.5 x 61 cm
 Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



71. **Chang Shuhong** (1904–1994)
Thunder Throughout the Land
 1939
 Oil on canvas; 86 x 63 cm
 Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



72. Tang Yihe (1905–1944)

The Trumpet Call of July 7

1940

Oil on canvas; 32 x 61 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



73. Yu Ben (b. 1905)

The Unemployed

1941

Oil on canvas; 50.5 x 61 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



The Lure of the West: Modern Chinese Oil Painting

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During the 1920s and 1930s many Chinese students embraced the culture of the West as China's destiny. Born at the turn of the century, when China's imperial system collapsed, they were educated at the moment of transition from the old to the new, a period of extraordinary hope and enthusiasm for China's modernization. To many of that generation, modern art and Western art were synonymous; and they believed that, by adopting Western forms, China might create an art in keeping with its new domestic and international situation.

Of the various literary movements that sprang from the reformist cultural convictions of the times, the literature of the May Fourth Movement has been recognized as particularly important. The May Fourth Movement took its name from a demonstration held in Beijing on 4 May 1919, mainly by university students and professors, to oppose their government's agreement to certain humiliating provisions of the Treaty of Versailles which had ended World War I. Chief source of outrage were the clauses whereby prewar German powers in Shandong Province were not returned to China but instead awarded to Japan. Patriotic fury at the weakness that prevented China's new government from resisting Japanese imperialism fueled a cultural movement whose twin goals were to throw off the diplomatic legacy of China's feeble final dynasty and to compete with Western societies on their own terms in all aspects of life.

The fiction, poetry, and drama associated with the May Fourth Movement were part of a larger ferment of opposition to foreign imperialism, social inequities, and political despotism—and also to much of China's classical culture, which was perceived as intrinsic to China's debility. "Science and democracy," considered the twin pillars of Western strength, became the Movement's rallying cry, requiring as corollary the conversion of China's common masses into the informed and engaged citizenry on which democracy is predicated. To make literature an instrument of this conversion, it was to be no longer written in classical Chinese but in the vernacular.

One of the best-known results of the May Fourth Movement was, in historian

Merle Goldman's words, "a literary flowering that was one of the most creative and brilliant episodes in modern Chinese history."¹ Writers such as Lu Xun (1881–1936), Yu Dafu (1896–1945), Qu Qiubai (1899–1935), Mao Dun (birth name Shen Yanbing; 1896–1981), Wen Yiduo (1899–1946), Ding Ling (1904–1986), and many others gathered in Shanghai, attracted and stimulated by the cosmopolitan culture and by the comparative literary freedom from censorship (or even arrest) that obtained in the treaty port's foreign concessions. There a modern Chinese literary movement flourished for almost two decades (until the Japanese bombing of Shanghai in 1937), absorbing all the major trends of Western culture, including romanticism, realism, naturalism, and symbolism. In the process, writers formulated new standards for use of the Chinese language and adapted from Western literature styles and genres that were previously unknown in China.

A modern art blossomed at approximately the same time, nourished by the same sources that inspired the writers. Its developments were at times parallel to, and thus separate from those in literature, but its artists were on some occasions directly involved with May Fourth writers, and may thus be considered part of the same cultural phenomenon. Our understanding of that art, however, and in particular the oil paintings, necessarily differs from our understanding of the literature, because of basic differences in the nature of the two arts. Whereas the survival of a single copy of a literary work may be enough to ensure its place in the body of world literature, destruction of an original oil painting effectively removes it from the history of art. Even if it has been published and its importance in its time is well documented, the impossibility of experiencing the painting at first hand precludes the necessary immediacy of experience that might have been possible were the work extant. When paintings are lost, we find ourselves left with only traces, as though a summary of a great novel had survived as evidence of its importance.

Massive destruction of art works occurred numerous times in twentieth-century China, permanently restricting scholarly study of the modernist move-



Figure 1. Pang Xunqin (1906–1985). *Such Is Paris*. 1931. Oil painting.

ment in Chinese art. Perhaps the greatest damage to China's artistic heritage was inflicted by the Japanese bombing of Shanghai and other cities in the 1930s and by the wholesale destruction of cultural artifacts during the first five years of China's domestically instigated disaster, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). The comparatively small number of oil paintings in the current exhibition reflects the difficulties of preserving such work in times of war or violent social upheaval. Canvases, particularly large ones, are difficult to move quickly. Many paintings were destroyed in the Japanese bombing of Shanghai in 1932, which leveled the lovely suburban studio of Chen Baoyi, for example. In 1937 studios filled with a life's work were left behind as China's artists, traveling on foot and sometimes carrying small children, fled the invading Japanese. Some oil paintings were hastily unstretched and rolled up for temporary storage or transport, but the opportunity to restretch and repair them came only decades later, too late to prevent almost irreparable cracking and other damage to the painted surface. The greatest loss may have been the destruction of work left behind at the National Hangzhou Arts Academy in 1937, whose faculty comprised China's most active proponents of modern art. Of the work of artists whose paintings have been lost, we today can often learn little more than what an assiduous urban reader of the 1930s might have gleaned from reading about art exhibitions in pictorial magazines of the time.

The fate of the work of Pang Xunqin (1906–1985), a Paris-trained modernist, may be typical. In 1930 he returned from France to Shanghai, bringing his modernist paintings and an almost missionary zeal for creating modern Chinese art. Throughout the 1930s he continued to paint in styles related to those of contemporary France and to exhibit his work (see fig. 1). Escaping the invading Japanese in 1937, he and his young family trekked south from Beijing, where he had assumed a teaching post shortly before, then west to Hankou, Guilin, and Chongqing, taking with them his paintings of the 1920s and 1930s.

At the war's end the Pang family and their paintings moved to Hangzhou.

where Pang Xunqin headed the department of applied arts at the National Arts Academy, and then, in 1956, with Pang's appointment as director of the new Central Academy of Arts and Crafts, to Beijing. With the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, knowing that the extremist factions of the Red Guard would use his early paintings to convict him of ideological crimes, Pang destroyed his work with his own hands.²

Notwithstanding such losses, enough work survives to document the major trends in oil painting of the period. Modern trends, such as Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Constructivism, Cubism, Surrealism, Fauvism, Expressionism, and Futurism, were adapted by Chinese artists for their own purposes. Modernist woodcuts and graphic designs have survived in greater numbers than oil paintings, because they were produced in multiple editions and are easier to carry, although some are known by only a single example.

The path by which Western styles entered China naturally affected the initial response of the Chinese art world to them. In the early twentieth century Western art might be studied at art schools in or near China's treaty ports, primarily Shanghai and Guangzhou. The more adventurous aspiring artists would then go abroad for further study.

Many painters learned modern Western styles in Japan, the country whose cognate writing system afforded Chinese students the easiest access to modern culture and science. Beginning in the last decade of the Qing dynasty, which fell in 1911, successive waves of Chinese artists studied in Japan. One of the most influential was Li Shutong (1880–1942), who studied with Paris-trained artist Kuroda Seiki at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts from 1905 to 1910. Li taught briefly in Shanghai upon his return, then in 1912 moved to the Zhejiang First Normal School in Hangzhou, where he established a Western-style art curriculum modeled on that of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts. It is likely that his oil-painting students, whom he sent out to paint from nature, learned from him the Impressionist style of Kuroda Seiki, but this is only conjecture, since none of Li's own works have

survived. Li also taught graphic design, woodcuts, Western drawing, and music, and some of his students went on to become extraordinarily influential in China's art and cultural worlds. After training several classes of students over a period of five years, he resigned, and in 1918, after disposing of all his worldly goods, became a Buddhist monk and took the name Hongyi.¹

A second wave of influence entered China from Japan about 1920, when a group of young artists returned after five years of study there, some at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, others at the Kawabata Academy of Painting in Tokyo. Although Kuroda Seiki remained the patriarch of Japanese oil painters, most Chinese students of this generation followed such younger teachers as Fujishima Takeji (1867–1943) and went back to China as practitioners of Fauvism. Of this generation of Chinese oil-painting students in Japan, those who achieved greatest prominence were Chen Baoyi (1893–1945), Ni Yide (1901–1970), Guan Liang (1900–1986) (see fig. 2), Zhu Jizhan (1892–1996), and Xu Xingzhi (1904–1994).²

Guan Liang recalled that during the time he and his colleagues were studying in Tokyo, the Japanese art world was in transition. Kuroda Seiki's manner was considered fundamental training for students in Japan, but their teachers at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, most notably Nakamura Fusetsu (1866–1943) and Fujishima Takeji, urged them not to be bound by the representational constraints of pure academicism, but instead to explore the various schools of modern art. Opportunities to see modernist European paintings on exhibition in Japan were commonplace at the time, and students' eyes were opened and their creativity energized by seeing works of Impressionists, Post-Impressionists, Cubists, Fauves, and others.³

While studying in Tokyo, four oil painters had organized themselves into a group they called *Yishushe* ("Arts Society"): Guan Liang and Hu Gentian (1892–1986), both from Canton, Chen Baoyi from Shanghai, and Xu Dunggu from Taiwan. These four graduated from art school and moved to Shanghai within a year or two of one another in 1920–1921.⁴ In 1922 they organized a show of their own

work at the Ningbo Native Place Society, one of the most important private exhibition spaces in Shanghai, an event that Chen Baoyi believed to have been quite influential in Shanghai oil painting circles at the time.⁵ The few surviving works by these four painters reflect primarily their interest in Post-Impressionism and Fauvism.

The trends in Japanese Western-style painting of this period that appealed to young Chinese artists were, at least in certain respects, the product of complicated crosscultural interactions. Nineteenth-century Japanese *ukiyo-e* printmakers made dramatic compositional breakthroughs based in part on their experiments with Western-style perspective. Later, European artists such as Van Gogh and Matisse discovered these Japanese prints and were influenced by their bold use of color and (in Western terms) comparatively two-dimensional pictorial space. In turn, these European artists were important stylistic sources for early Japanese and Chinese modernist oil painters. Particularly instrumental in creating a Japanese version of Post-Impressionist style were Yasui Sōtarō (1888–1955) and Umehara Ryūzaburō (1888–1986).⁶

The second wave of Japanese influence is exemplified in a painting done in 1929 by Guan Zilan (Violet Kwan), an artist of Cantonese descent who was active in Shanghai in the late 1920s and early 1930s. *A Portrait of Miss L* (cat. 62) clearly shows Guan's attraction to the styles of Matisse and Yasui Sōtarō. Matisse's incorporation of such elements as Oriental robes, furniture, and fans into many of his compositions reflect his interest in Japonisme. These same elements in a Chinese oil painting might be read quite differently by a Chinese viewer. The subject of Guan's *Portrait of Miss L* is garbed in the latest Shanghai fashion, with a stylishly short haircut similar to one the artist herself sported in 1928. She wears a vest, as did Guan at her exhibition opening in 1930, and a brightly colored *qipao*, the sheath dress with Manchu collar that was popular in Shanghai throughout the first half of the twentieth century. To the Japanese and Chinese oil painters, these elements of Miss L's costume would have seemed everyday, per-



Figure 2. Guan Liang (1900–1986). West Mountain. 1935. Oil painting.



Figure 3. Ni Yide (1901–1970). Summer. 1932. Oil painting.

haps high-style and modern but in any case not exotic. The exotic element would have been Miss L's Occidentalizing lapdog (or stuffed animal?), since neither pets nor toys were considered suitable attributes for sitters in traditional Chinese portraits.

Details of Guan Zilan's life and artistic career have not been ascertained, and she is not included in most standard reference books, but she is known to have been a disciple of Japanese-trained artist Chen Baoyi, who painted her portrait in 1930.⁹ She was a 1927 graduate of the Western-style painting department of Shanghai Chinese Arts University (*Shanghai Zhonghua yishu daxue*), where Chen was director in the late 1920s. In 1928 she was photographed with Chen and the Japanese artist Arishima Ikuma (1882–1974) in Shanghai, and she soon went to Japan to study at Tokyo Institute of Culture.¹⁰ She returned to China in 1930 to take a teaching position at Xiyang Academy of Fine Arts. Although she lived until 1986, little has been published about her later life.¹¹

Guan Zilan held a large solo exhibition in 1930 that was reported in a full-page feature in the influential mass-media pictorial magazine *The Young Companion*.¹² A family photograph taken at the same exhibition depicts the artist receiving congratulations from her teacher's young daughter, as he and his Japanese wife stand to either side. *Portrait of Miss L* is one of the paintings visible in the background.¹³ It is a work typical of the second wave of modern oil painters in China, who found in Post-Impressionism a congenial artistic language.

Artists who studied in Japan during the 1930s, such as Zhao Shou (cats. 66, 67), may represent a third wave of Western art that entered China from Japan; they exemplify a group with a radically different view of modern art. Avant-garde styles such as Dadaism, Constructivism, and Surrealism poured into Japan during the decade between 1925 and 1935. A group in Tokyo calling itself The Independent Art Association (*Dokuritsu bijutsu kyōkai*) held its first exhibition in early 1931, aiming to provide alternatives to the styles and administrative structures of the Japanese art world of the time.¹⁴ A leading figure in this Japanese movement was

Satomi Katsuzō (1895–1981), who taught some of the Chinese students, including Zhao Shou.

Like many of the adventurous early artists, Zhao was Cantonese. After studying at the Guangzhou Art School (*Guangzhou meishu xueyao*) in the late 1920s, he moved to Shanghai in 1931, where he met European-trained modernists such as Pang Xunqin. In 1933 he went to Japan to study the new styles and soon became a founding member of the Chinese Independent Art Association, established in Tokyo in 1934 to promote Surrealism. The Chinese Independent Art Association must have been inspired by the earlier Japanese prototype.¹⁵ The term “independent” in the title referred to the group's rejection of mimesis, or, according to one artist's account, to the freedom of not modeling art on real life.¹⁶ Besides Zhao Shou, the Chinese group included the modernists Li Dongping, Liang Xihong (1912–1982), Li Zhongsheng, and Zeng Ming, as well as their Japanese teacher, Satomi Katsuzō, and other Japanese friends.

All the Chinese members of the group returned to China in 1935 and began actively exhibiting their work. In their first exhibition, held at the Guangzhou Education Center in March, Zhao Shou exhibited *Color* (cat. 67); and in their second exhibition, in Shanghai in October, he showed *Let's Jump* (cat. 66). The Shanghai exhibition, in particular, received excellent media coverage, with illustrated features appearing in the Shanghai pictorial magazines “Young Companion” and “Modern Miscellany.”¹⁷ Judging from these publications, Zhao's brightly colored work appears to be the most striking in the exhibition.

His definition of Surrealism was recorded by a contemporary writer: “Although so-called Surrealism is ‘non-realistic,’ it is not ‘without reality.’ It is actually ‘non-realistic reality.’ This reality is not from visual experience but from the imagination. It is impossible to understand this kind of ‘non-realism’, or so-called ‘non-realistic reality’, from visual experience. We therefore must understand it in our imaginations.”¹⁸ Zhao remained a practitioner of Surrealism for almost two decades. But when Socialist Realism prevailed in Chinese

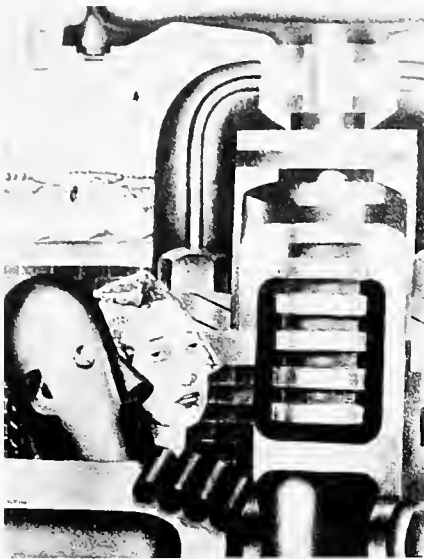


Figure 4. Pang Xunqin (1906–1985). *Composition*. 1931. Oil painting.



Figure 5. Pang Xunqin (1906–1985). *Such Is Shanghai* (Miming Life's Riddle). 1931. Oil painting.

art. Zhao seems to have stopped painting.

Although Japan may have been the closest repository of Western art education, Europe itself, and particularly France, was the most direct and respected source of modernist styles for Chinese artists. Pang Xunqin was one of modernism's most effective advocates (see cat. 64). Pang had gone to Paris at the age of nineteen and studied modernist styles at the Académie Julien. After his return to China five years later, he established a small modernist salon, and by 1931 had joined with Tokyo-trained artist Ni Yide to try to form a Shanghai-based avant-garde. Ni, who had studied at the Kawabata Academy in 1927–1928, was exposed to the Japanese avant-garde of the late 1920s, while Pang had brought back the latest in Parisian styles. The name the group took for itself, *Juelanshe*, which they rendered in English as Storm Society, in Chinese refers to a great wave. One member of the group, Wang Jiyuan, wrote, "We want to hit the rotten art of contemporary China with a powerful wave."¹⁹

Under the leadership of Pang Xunqin and Ni Yide, the Storm Society assembled like-minded young artists for a series of five exhibitions held in the first half of the 1930s. Some works, including Ni Yide's earlier paintings, resembled the Post-Impressionist style paintings of Guan Liang and other slightly older Japan-trained artists. Ni Yide was a transitional figure between the second and third wave of Western-style painters, and although he painted in the slightly older Post-Impressionist style, in his essays he enthusiastically advocated the most modern modes. His enthusiasm for modernism eventually pushed his painting in the direction of slightly greater abstraction (fig. 3). Others in this stylistically diverse group pushed harder against the barriers of representation. Pang Xunqin experimented with work he called "decorations," most of them fragmented images of urban life, and some including elements of commentary on the modern condition. One of his best-known works of the period is a piece called *Composition* (fig. 4), which depicts human figures as if imprisoned by industrial machinery. Others, including *Such Is Paris* (fig. 1) and *Such Is Shanghai* (fig. 5), depict moneyed leisure, accenting the disjunction

between the blank human faces and the paraphernalia of pleasure surrounding them. Indeed, Pang's daughter remembers that when her father came back from Paris he was appalled at the overwhelming emphasis on money that pervaded Shanghai society.

The Storm Society's only exhibition prize was awarded to Qiu Ti (1906–1958) for her highly stylized still life with red leaves and green flowers, which was shown in the second exhibition. The painting, published in 1933, apparently drew enough criticism from the realist camp that Ni Yide felt compelled to defend it in an article published the following year.²⁰ Qiu had graduated from the Shanghai Art Academy in 1928, then studied in Tokyo, and returned to the Shanghai Art Academy as a graduate student in 1931. She married Pang Xunqin in 1932. In 1934, in the group's third exhibition, she showed a crisply painted modern still life (cat. 65), celebrating the formal beauty of everyday objects, many of which, like the percolator and thermos bottle, were products of modern industrial manufacture.²¹

A cleanness of form similar to that of Qiu Ti is seen in Pang Xunqin's major painting of 1934, *Son of the Earth*, which was also shown in that same exhibition. It is one of his rare ventures into direct social criticism, and the political hostility it provoked, which surprised him, prevented its publication in the popular press. As noted above, Pang destroyed the painting in 1966; it survives only in the form of a watercolor sketch (cat. 64). According to Pang's autobiography, the work was inspired by the terrible Jiangnan droughts of 1934. Its title is a play on the imperial appellation "Son of Heaven," while the composition, poses, and expressions of the dead or dying peasant child and his mutely anguished parents evoke both the Descent from the Cross and the Pietà of Christian art. *Son of the Earth* was interpreted as a passionate indictment of China's incompetent government. Pang received a death threat after the exhibition, accompanied by a warning to leave Shanghai. Soon after, his friend Zhang Xuan received a phone call informing him that Pang Xunqin would soon be arrested. Neither threat was carried out, but political assassinations, kidnappings, and arrests were fre-



Figure 6. Lin Fengmian (1900–1991).
Composition. 1934. Oil painting.

quent enough in Shanghai to make the threats alarming.²² In an environment of political strife, social disintegration, and endemic suffering, even lovers of pure art, such as Pang Xunqin and Ni Yide, who took as their mission the discovery of a great Chinese modern master, could not remain politically disengaged. The purity of the modernist vision, a detachment from the practical troubles of everyday life, was easier to maintain outside China's borders.

Less well known in China but greatly admired by his colleagues—including Pang Xunqin and Chen Baoyi, who knew him in the 1920s—was Sichuanese painter Chang Yu (1901–1966), known in France as Sanyu.²³ Chang Yu, after training in China as a flower-and-bird painter, went to Japan in his late teens, studying there for two years, at about the same time as “second-wave” painters Guan Liang and Chen Baoyi. In 1921 he proceeded to Paris, studying at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière and exhibiting in 1925 at the Salon d'Automne. He achieved some success in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. A great admirer of Picasso, with whom (according to Pang Xunqin) he became friends, Chang sought a much sparer and more restrained tone in his own work, which French critics identified as particularly Asian. The only painting by Chang in the current exhibition is characteristic of his work from the first half of the 1930s, and in its clean palette and its *joie de vivre* is typical of his style (see cat. 63). By the 1940s he had labeled his own work “simplicism,” while some critics referred to it as “essentialism.” Pang, who met Chang in Paris (where Pang was studying from 1925 to 1929), was particularly struck by Chang's drawings in pencil and Chinese ink, and writes that this aspect of Chang's work strongly influenced both him and his Storm Society colleague and friend Zhang Xuan. Pang recalled the extraordinary tidiness of Sanyu's studio, which seemed to match the minimalist restraint of his painting.²⁴ Of particular interest to Chinese modernists of the 1930s was Chang's successful combination of Chinese brush and ink and Chinese aesthetics with the modern art styles of contemporary Europe.

One of the most influential centers of French modernist styles was the presti-

gious National Hangzhou Arts Academy, established in 1929 and headed by French-trained Lin Fengmian (1900–1991) (see fig. 6). A proponent of individual creativity and modern styles, he assembled a like-minded faculty, including teachers from France and other countries, and created a very lively, free-thinking academic atmosphere. Lin's work from this period does not survive, but reproductions of his work and that of his faculty make their modernist aspirations clear (see fig. 7). Maintaining the openness of discourse he had experienced in France proved to be difficult after the Nationalist government began arresting leftists in the 1930s, but the general mood of the academy was relatively open-minded throughout its twenty-year history. Many significant artists of the next generation were trained there.

The practitioners of the most modern European styles in China were undoubtedly the members of the Storm Society and Chinese Independent Art Association. A rather different style, promoted by conservative academics, might have fared less well under different political circumstances, but it gradually grew in influence in China during the 1930s and 1940s, just as it began losing its hold on artists in Europe and the U.S. The origins of this style in China can be traced to the late nineteenth century, when Cantonese painter Li Tiefu (1869–1952) went to England and the United States to study art. As Michael Sullivan notes, Li spent more than forty years in the West before returning to China in 1930.²⁵ His business card declared him a follower of William Chase and John Sargent, and his early works, which survive (though in very poor condition), are indeed exquisite portraits in a somewhat romantic style. His influence was not great, however, except in light of subsequent events.

The conservative artist who wielded the greatest influence in China was Xu Beihong (1895–1953). He studied backdrop painting in Shanghai, and then traveled briefly to Japan. He went to Europe on a government scholarship in 1919, and studied in France and Germany from 1919 to 1927, mastering an exquisitely detailed style of drawing and a highly romantic style of oil painting. His 1926 portrait of his young wife, Jiang Biwei, playing a bamboo flute is one of the most evocative

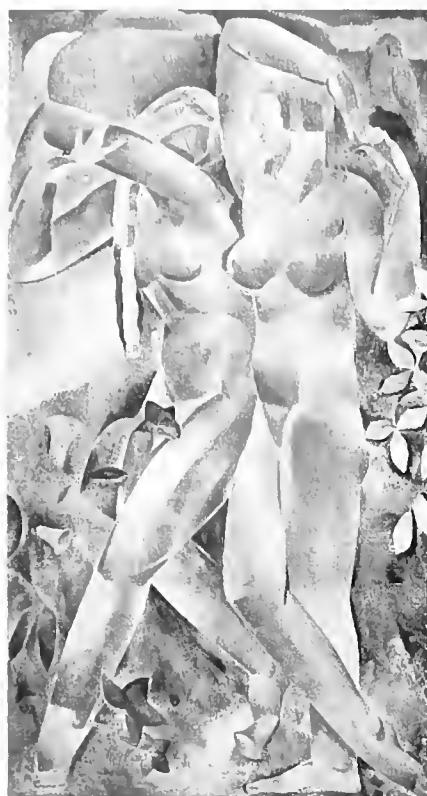


Figure 7. Fang Ganmin (1906–1984). *Melody in Autumn*, 1933. Oil painting.

from his European period (cat. 61). One cannot fault his technique, and his small works from this period, especially his drawings, are quite beautiful.

Xu Beihong became embroiled in what was to become a highly polarized debate about the nature of oil painting. The National Exhibition of 1929, held in Shanghai and sponsored by the Ministry of Education, included a substantial section of what were called “Western paintings” in a variety of different modern styles. Most of the work was figurative, but the catalogue, which presents only a selection of the exhibited work, includes no paintings by Xu. Indeed, academic realism is scarcely represented there, and the majority of the works reproduced show the influence of modern European styles. In response, Xu published an article entitled “Doubts,” in which he castigated fellow artists who worked in the styles of Cézanne or Matisse, and declared that academic realism was the only legitimate style of oil painting. The modernists were defended by the romantic poet Xu Zhimo, among others, with the terms of the debate focused not on which modern approaches were most successful but instead on whether modernism itself was legitimate.²⁶

The majority of oil painters, particularly the sophisticates in Shanghai and Hangzhou, with their close ties to France and Japan, may not have taken Xu Beihong’s rather retrograde position very seriously at first. But after the Communist victory in 1949 various coincidences—including Xu’s political activities and his friendship with Zhou Enlai—turned the tables on the modernists by elevating Xu’s view of art to the national standard. Unlike Lin Fengmian and most other foreign-trained painters, who urged their students to develop their own styles, Xu seems (according to the stylistic evidence) to have encouraged a manner very close to his own, one in which whatever expressivity exists comes from the sitter rather than from any painterly qualities in the work. He had a number of loyal students, including Wu Zuoren, Zhang Anzhi, and the lesser-known Sha Qi (b. 1914), who painted very little after 1949. Sha graduated from the art department of National Central University, and spent the nine years from 1937 to 1946 in

Europe, a sojourn apparently arranged by Xu. A self-portrait believed to date from the 1930s (cat. 68) is in the same academic style as that of his teacher.

THE WAR YEARS

A distinctive change in the character of Chinese oil painting occurred after the Japanese invasion of 1937. From that time on, simple joyful celebrations of modernity like those of Guan Zilan or Chang Yu all but disappeared. Typical, in its world-weary flavor, is the painting of Pan Yuliang (1902–1977). Hers may be one of the more remarkable stories of the transition of an individual from the feudal era to the modern world, but one suspects that early wretchedness destroyed any capacity for celebration. Born into a poor family in Yangzhou, she was sold into a brothel after the death of her parents and, as a teenage concubine, was married to a man named Pan, adopted his surname, and moved with him to Shanghai. In 1918 she began studying painting at the Shanghai Art Academy, and in 1921 received a government scholarship to study in Lyons. Eight years later, after receiving her degree, she returned to Shanghai and participated in the National Exhibition of 1929. She taught for a time at the Shanghai Art Academy, and later under Xu Beihong at the National Central University. It is often said that despite her successful artistic career she was unable, in China, to overcome the social stigma attached to her early life, and thus, in 1937, at the age of thirty-five, she returned to France, where she remained for the rest of her life. Still, she bequeathed her paintings to the provincial museum in Anhui, the home province of her husband.

Pan’s paintings tended to focus on the female body, often her own, as may be the case in her 1929 painting for the National Exhibition. By the mid-1940s she had developed a style, based on a synthesis of various Post-Impressionist styles but imbued with a psychological intensity. This is evident in the *Self-Portrait* of 1945 (cat. 69), which, in contrast to the cheerful, almost naïve use of the Matisse style in Guan Zilan’s portrait of 1929, is stern and dour, its use of Ganguin-like dark skin tones more gloomy than exotic.

The turn toward self-reflection may

be seen in the pictures of many artists working in China during the war years. Chang Shuhong, who returned to China in 1936 after a decade in France, had begun teaching at the Beiping National Art Academy immediately before the Japanese attack. He was presumably a refugee, with his colleagues, students, and small daughter, in China's interior when he painted *Thunder Throughout the Land* (cat. 71) in 1939, two years after the Japanese invasion. In bright colors, it depicts the small pleasures of daily life, including blooming plants, cherries, a drink, a foreign-language newspaper, a doll, and, through the window, a view of distant mountains. The cheerful domestic elements are made to seem fragile and transitory by the temporary look of the simple brick room in which they are placed and by the work's ominous title.

A different approach was taken by another Paris-trained artist, Tang Yihe (1905–1944), who had studied in France between 1930 and 1934. On returning to China, he took charge of the oil-painting department at the Wuchang Arts School in his native city of Hankou. During World War II he devoted himself to propaganda work, including the unfinished painting *Trumpet Call of July 7* (cat. 72). In the title of this small painting he evoked the beginning of the war with Japan, an incident at Marco Polo Bridge outside Beijing on 7 July 1937. The energetic figures in this work were intended to rally China's youth to fight the enemy.

Shanghai painter Chen Qiucuo (1906–1988), with his somber but hopeful and lyrical *Flowers Above the Trenches* (cat. 70), exploited the techniques that he had learned at the Shanghai Art Academy to particularly good effect. From the late 1920s to the mid-1930s he was a founding member of the White Goose Painting Club and later the White Goose Painting School in Shanghai; the latter became an important organization for Shanghai's modernist and activist artists.

Yu Ben (b. 1905), born in Guangzhou, studied painting in Canada from 1927 to 1935. His painting of 1941, *The Unemployed* (cat. 73), typifies another, more pessimistic trend in art of that period, in which distress at the human suffering caused by foreign invasion was gradually replaced by implied censure of a govern-

ment that could not care for its people. Like some of the leftist woodcuts, which it resembles in theme, this work was part of a cultural movement that facilitated the Communist victory of 1948 and 1949.

Many artists ceased painting in oils during the war years, sometimes for practical material reasons. For others, however, the grim realities of refugee life made a turning point to even greater changes. For example, as Michael Sullivan wrote in 1959, the war turned Pang Xunqin away from modernism and toward sympathetic descriptions of the people of China's hinterland, often rendered in ink.²⁷ His friend Ni Yide joined the Communist party and devoted his considerable energies to political and social work, only rarely returning to his easel.

The outbreak of the war with Japan in 1937 marks a watershed in the development of Chinese oil painting. The truly desperate situation of China and most of its artists after 1937 left little energy for the luxury of pure self-expression. In flight from the Japanese, most art schools were relocated farther inland, often to places with inadequate facilities. The trauma and deracination experienced by the artists resulted in a varied group of canvases on a wide range of subjects, including upbeat propaganda pictures, introspective domestic meditations, and desolate images of war. What they all have in common is the connection made by the artist between the real conditions of life and the painting. Other mediums reveal a similar shift, as artists strove to save their nation.

NOTES

1. Merle Goldman, ed., *Modern Chinese Literature in the May Fourth Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 1.
2. Pang Xunqin, *Jiushi zheyang zouguo laide* ("Just Went Along This Way") (Beijing: Joint Publishers, 1988), p. 215.
3. Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth Century China* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996), p. 29; May-ching Kao, "The Beginning of the Western-style Painting Movement in Relationship to Reform in Education in Early Twentieth-Century China," *New Asia Academic Bulletin*, vol. 4 (1983), pp. 386–87; also see Yuan Xilian, "Yu yu dashi zhi guanxi" ("My Relationship with the Master"), in Lin Ziqing, ed., *Hongyi dashi yimo* ("Calligraphy

by the Late Monk Hongyi"); reprint (Hong Kong, 1970), p. 336.

4. Li Chao, *Shanghai youhua shi* ("A History of Oil Painting in Shanghai") (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Art Publishing House, 1995), p. 66.

5. Li Chao, "A History of Oil Painting in Shanghai," quoting from Guan Liang, *Guan Liang huiyilu* ("Reminiscences") (Shanghai: Shanghai Calligraphy and Painting Publishing House, 1984), pp. 10-20.

6. Xu Dugu was from Tainan, Taiwan, then under Japanese rule, but upon his graduation from Tokyo Art School in 1920 went to Shanghai (Li Chao, "A History of Oil Painting in Shanghai," p. 349). Hu Gentian graduated from Tokyo Art School in the same year (Li Chao, p. 329). Chen Baoyi studied first at Kawabata Academy of Painting in Tokyo, but completed his degree at Tokyo Art School in 1921. See Chen Ruilin, *Xiandai meishujia Chen Baoyi* ("The Modern Artist Chen Baoyi"), (Beijing: People's Art Publishing House, 1988), p. 104. Guan Liang studied at Kawabata Academy of Painting and at Pacific Art School, returning to China in 1922 (Li Chao, "A History of Oil Painting in Shanghai," p. 328).

7. He also believed it to have been the first oil-painting exhibition in China to sell admission tickets. Chen Baoyi, "Yanghua yundong guocheng lueji" ("Brief Records of the Foreign Painting Movement"), originally published in *Shanghai yishu yuekan* ("Shanghai Arts Monthly"), 1942, nos. 5-12; reprinted in Chen Ruilin, *Xiandai meishujia Chen Baoyi* ("The Modern Artist Chen Baoyi") (Beijing: People's Art Publishing House, 1988), pp. 104-5. Also mentioned in Li Chao, "A History of Oil Painting in Shanghai," p. 66.

8. See the exhibition catalogue *Paris in Japan: the Japanese Encounter with European Painting* (St. Louis: Washington University, 1987).

9. Now in the China National Art Gallery. Reproduced in Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth Century China*, fig. 2.6, p. 31.

10. In the picture one sees Guan Zilan, with Chen Baoyi, Mrs. Chen, and Arishima Ikuma, in 1928, in Shanghai. Chen Ruilin, "The Modern Artist Chen Baoyi," p. 56.

11. For a brief biography, see Tao Yongbai, *Zhongguo youhua, 1700-1985* ("Oil Painting in China, 1700-1985") (Nanjing: Jiangsu Art Publishers, 1988), p. 5; Chen Ruilin and Lin Rixiong, eds., *Dangdai Zhongguo youhua* ("Contemporary Chinese Oil Painting") (Shijiazhuang: Hebei Art Publishers, 1991), p. 149; and Li Chao, "A History of Oil Painting in

Shanghai," p. 328.

12. *Liangyou* ("The Young Companion"), no. 50 (September-October 1930), p. 27.

13. See Chen Ruilin, "The Modern Artist Chen Baoyi," p. 57.

14. Kawakita Noriaki and Takashima Hideya, *Kindai Nihon Kaigashi* ("History of Modern Japanese Painting") (Tokyo: Chûô Kōronsha, 1985), pp. 278-81.

15. Kuiyi Shen, "Modernism in Pre-War China" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 11 October 1996).

16. Zhu Boxiong and Chen Ruilin, *Zhongguo xihua wushinian 1898-1949* ("Western-style Painting in China, 1898-1949"), (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1989), p. 138.

17. "The Young Companion" (*Liangyou*), no. 111 (November 1935), p. 20; and *Shidai* ("Modern Miscellany"), vol. 8, no. 10 (1935).

18. Mu Tianfan, "An Introduction to the Independent Painters," *Yishu*, vol. 3, no. 11.

19. This translation is from Ralph Croizier, "Post-Impressionists in Pre-War Shanghai: The Juelanshe (Storm Society) and the Fate of Modernism in Republican China," in John Clark, ed., *Modernity in Asian Art* (Canberra: Wild Peony, 1993), p. 140.

20. See Croizier, "Post-Impressionists in Pre-War Shanghai," p. 140.

21. For publication of this painting and other work from the Storm Society's third exhibition, see "The Young Companion," no. 111 (November 1935), p. 21.

22. Pang Xunqin, "Just Went Along This Way," p. 182.

23. Chen Baoyi recalls that Chang Yu returned from France in about 1926 or 1927, and that he went by the name Chang Youshu; see Chen Ruilin, "The Modern Artist Chen Baoyi," pp. 107-8. This would seem to correspond to a trip mentioned in Sanyu's 1932 biography written by his friend Johan Franco. See Sotheby's auction catalogue, *The Johan Franco Collection of Works by Sanyu* (Taipei, 15 October 1995), n.p.

24. Pang Xunqin, "Just Went Along This Way," pp. 82-83.

25. Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth Century China*, p. 20.

26. The notorious debate first appeared in the special periodical published in conjunction with the exhibition, *Meizhan tekan*, ("Special Issue on the National Art Exhibition").

27. Michael Sullivan, *Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959), pp. 53-57.

Commercial Art and China's Modernization

Julia F. Andrews, The Ohio State University

The impulse toward modernity in twentieth-century Chinese art was as multifaceted as the society from which it sprang. Commercial art was an extremely influential part of China's modern art world, particularly in the financial and industrial center of Shanghai. Commercial artists of this period, working mainly in fields related to industry and technology, were both idealistic and pragmatic, perhaps in equal measure.

TRADITIONAL ILLUSTRATION

One of the last masterpieces of traditional Chinese illustrated printing is the painter Ren Xiong's highly original *Drinking Cards with Illustrations of the 48 Immortals* (*Lixian jiupai*) (cat. 4), featured in the current exhibition. These elegant and amusing illustrations, designed in 1854 for a drinking game, were carved on pear-wood blocks and hand-printed by Ren Xiong's fellow townsman Cai Zhaochu.¹ Originally given as gifts to guests at the one-month birthday celebration for the artist's oldest son, Ren Yu, they were subsequently reprinted numerous times in book form. Each page comprises a striking picture, a brief poetic or philosophical inscription, and finally, an instruction to drink wine that relates to the subject matter in a surprising or humorous way. Among the images are scenes of dramatic action: Qin Gao, a Daoist Immortal who had undergone a prolonged underwater submersion, bursts forth from the waters of the Tang River astride a red carp, thus assuring his worried followers of his well-being (lower left). The accompanying inscription quotes Confucius, "There is no [benevolent ruler who follows] the Dao, so [I shall] drift over the sea," while the drinking instruction, amusing in its comparatively mundane tone, orders: "Those who are eating fish [must] drink a big cup." In contrast, the Six Dynasties (222–589) Daoist master Ge Hong (ca. 280–ca. 343; upper left), who rejected high rank in favor of a lowly official post near a southern mountain famous for its elixirs of immortality, is rendered in a quiet, domestic pose. His extraordinary character, however, is conveyed by the highly exaggerated outlines of his robe; the verse on this card requires virtuous officials to drink. The Six Dynasties

Daoist alchemist Tao Hongjing (456–536; lower right), who was particularly fond of pines, is depicted walking beside a pine, with his back to us, as he looks at an album of botanical paintings. He built a multistory pavilion, so that he might stay high above the mundane world. The accompanying verse calls for those who live in multistory pavilions to drink. The Tang era lady Lu Meiniang, who left the palace in the Yuanhe reign (806–821) to become a Daoist nun, is depicted at her secular specialty, embroidery. She was said to have embroidered the entire *Lotus Sutra* on a piece of one-foot-long silk, with characters the size of a grain of millet. The drinking inscription on this leaf, however, concerns her appearance. The lady was known for her eyebrows, and the inscription on this leaf calls on those with long eyebrows to drink.

The piquancy of his series derives in large part from its amusing conjunctions of text and imagery; its artistic excellence is owing to Ren Xiong's particularly skillful contrasts of fine textures and large expanses of white paper. Dramatic—sometimes unexpected—poses, rendered in carefully exaggerated brushwork, make many of these images startlingly different from the standard depictions of these well-known characters. Although Ren and his printer were familiar with color printing, including the Ten Bamboo Studio letter papers, they chose instead to exploit the effectiveness of finely carved lines in monochrome.

Books in nineteenth-century China were printed from wooden blocks, each carved with a double-page spread of text and/or pictures. The rather thin paper was printed on one side only, then folded, with the printing on the outside, to form a verso and a recto page. The folded edge was not cut. Front and back covers were made of plain paper, usually somewhat stiffer or thicker, with a handwritten title slip pasted onto the front cover. The spine was left unbound. Because the vertical columns of Chinese script are read from right to left, pages in traditionally formatted books would have been turned from left to right, i.e., opposite to modern Western books. Enclosed in their plain paper covers, the books were string-bound on the right (i.e., the raw-edged) side. a

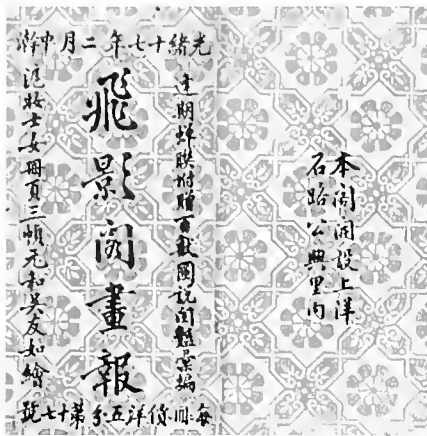


Figure 1-a. Cover of Fleeting Shadow Pavilion Pictorial (*Feiyingge huabao*). 1891. Private collection.

convention that dates from the Ming dynasty (1368–1644).

The introduction of lithographic printing into Shanghai during the last quarter of the nineteenth century began to change the nature of Chinese publishing. In 1872 British entrepreneurs Frederick and Ernest Major established *Shen bao*, a newspaper aimed at Chinese readers and skillfully edited and run by a Chinese staff.² The Major brothers subsequently acquired several Chinese book companies and undertook the photolithographic printing of Chinese books. In 1884, at one of these firms, Dianshizhai Studio, they began to publish a lithographically printed pictorial magazine called *Dianshizhai huabao* ("Dianshizhai Pictorial"), generally consisting of eight leaves. It appeared every ten days, wrapped in red paper, and included illustrated news items, travel accounts, and fiction. The

illustrators worked in a variety of outline styles, some clearly emulating European newspapers of the period, others more traditionally Chinese. The best figural compositions show excellent understanding of both European drawing and traditional Chinese illustration. The original drawings for this publication, many of which survive in the collection of the Shanghai Municipal History Museum, were painted with a Chinese brush and signed by well-known artists.

One of the most talented and ambitious painters among these illustrators was Wu Jiayou (better known by his alternate name of Youru; d. 1893), who worked for the Majors for five or six years before setting up a competing firm. His *Fleeting Shadow Pavilion*, or *Feiyingge*, was located at Gongdianli, off Shangyang shilu, and published a magazine very similar to *Dianshizhai huabao* called *Feiyingge huabao* ("Fleeting Shadow Pavilion Pictorial"). In format Wu's new publication remained very traditional, printed in monochrome ink on Chinese paper and bound in accordion folds, with the pages glued together at the outer edges. For its cover it had a brightly colored soft paper wrapper (fig. 1-a) bearing the printed title, date of publication, and an announcement of special features. Photolithography made reproduction of the written text easy, and one finds long passages of text of various kinds on every page, including news, stories, and sometimes messages from the publisher. Each issue usually consisted of ten pictorial features, each independently numbered, including seven pages of news, one separate feature entitled "Ladies in the Latest Fashions," and two special features: natural history and famous ladies. The latter, which concluded each issue, was usually a historical tale. Wu's illustrations were elegantly rendered but fairly conservative compositions, usually placing figures in simple settings.

One such example, entitled "The Palace Lady of the Kaiyuan Period," sets a melancholy beauty against a mostly empty background (fig. 1-b). A few pieces of furniture, including a painted folding screen, serve to establish that the setting is an interior. The story, we are told, takes place in the eighth century, when Tang court ladies sewed garments for sol-



Figure 1-b. Wu Jiayou (?–1893). "Palace Lady of the Kaiyuan Period," *Fleeting Shadow Pavilion Pictorial* (*Feiyingge huabao*). 1890–1891. Private collection.



Figure 2. Cover design by Lu Xun (1881–1936) for his *Stories from Foreign Lands* (*Yuwai xiaoshuo ji*). 1909. Lu Xun Museum, Shanghai.

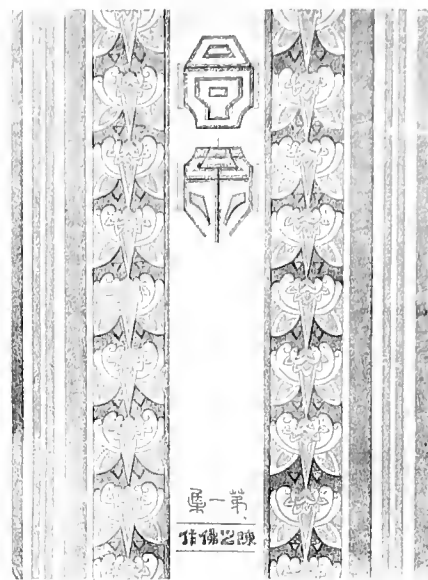


Figure 3. Cover design by Chen Zhifo (1896–1962) for his book *Design* (*Tu'an*). 1929.

diers defending the frontier. One soldier, to his surprise, found a long poem tucked into his new clothes. The seamstress-poet wrote that she knew her handiwork would be sent to a distant and desolate place but had no way of knowing who would receive it. As a palace lady-in-waiting, she was not permitted to marry, but she hoped that in her next life she might be the recipient's wife. The soldier gave the letter to his commander, who forwarded it to the emperor. The emperor sent word to the rear palace, the residence of his harem, commanding the writer to identify herself, with the assurance that she would not be punished. When the lady admitted her mortal offense, the emperor granted permission for her to marry the soldier. Wu Jiayou has depicted the lonely, yearning lady as she composes the illicit poem to her imagined lover.

Illustrations of news items or of feature stories about modern life, such as "Thief in the Flower Garden," from an 1891 issue, employ modified Western architectural perspective and complex interior scenes to enhance a sense of reality (cat. 22-a). In this feature, of a type that has been described as a combination of sensational journalism and reform crusading,³ an ostensibly true story is

recounted. A wealthy client who sought to buy the devotion of the famous Jiangsu courtesan Wang Sibao learned, after incurring substantial expenses in his misguided attempt, that she was in love with someone else. Bitterly angry, he engaged her services for the evening and then, as she slept, cut off her beautiful long hair. Wu has depicted him with Wang Sibao's coiled tresses in his hand and his surreptitious posture reflected in a mirror. In a caption Wu comments sympathetically that the career of the courtesan depends on her attractiveness, so that destroying her coiffure (particularly in an era when healthy women never wore their hair short) was akin to stealing her livelihood. The courtesan's chambers are appointed with a fascinating combination of Chinese furniture, gaslight fixtures, Chinese lanterns, a European-style mirror, hanging scrolls of painting and calligraphy, and framed photographs.

The same pictorial conventions are employed in an image that is completely Chinese, or at least does not obviously resonate with the hybrid culture of Shanghai. "A Family Estate in Autumn," for the feature entitled "Ladies in the Latest Fashions," depicts women of the wealthy elite amusing themselves and their children in a beautiful country house (cat. 22-b). Elegantly garbed ladies surrounded by happy children carefully tend crickets in a box on the table. More crickets are stored on handsome Chinese-style shelves, whose interiors are shown carefully shaded in the Western manner. The refined realism of this image also characterizes album-leaf paintings by the artist.

The magazine's content and Wu Jiayou's marketing strategy were clearly geared to the increasingly worldly and sophisticated Shanghai audience. He tried to increase circulation by making his pictures collectible—the separate numbering of the discrete features within each issue was intended to encourage readers to cut up the magazine and assemble the features into separate thematic albums of images on natural history, famous ladies of the past, or fashionable ladies of the present. For impulse buyers rather than collectors, the news items, whose selection and pre-



微象的悶苦

譯述者 著者白川野

Figure 4. Cover design by Tao Yuanqing (1893–1929) for Lu Xun's translation, *Symbol of Depression* (*Kumen de xiangzheng*). 1924. Lu Xun Museum, Shanghai.

sensation reflected certain traditions of European journalism, were enhanced with realistically detailed pictures in order to achieve a modern verisimilitude. *Feiyingge huabao* may be viewed as a typical example of Shanghai's hybrid culture, appealing to an urban Chinese audience with its traditional format and its stories of love and other human relationships, but also filled with the most up-to-date subjects and images. In particular, Wu Jiayou's figures are rendered naturalistically, according to Western conventions, in contrast to the expressive distortions of his predecessor Ren Xiong. The change from woodblock-printed illustrations to photolithography, and transformations in the nature of the publications in which they are found, are part of a more general development in late Qing dynasty Shanghai, in which European industrial techniques and (to some extent) publishing conventions were being used for the purpose of creating new forms of Chinese printed matter.

EARLY WESTERN BOOK COVER DESIGN

The development of cover design as a commercial practice and as an art grew out of the shift from string-bound books to stapled or glued bindings that accompanied changes in printing technology and in the entire concept of the book. As we have seen, early lithographically produced or typeset books, even translations, tended to bear on their front cover some variation of the traditional calligraphed label. A frequently cited example is an American pharmacology text, *Wanguo yaofang* (1886), which was printed lithographically from typeset characters. Wu Jiayou's *Feiyingge huabao* continued this practice, inherited from his former employers at *Dianshizhai huabao*.⁴

By the turn of the century, Western-style book covers with complex Victorian designs were common in China. Shanghai's Commercial Press and its competitors began using such covers, some of which show the influence of late nineteenth-century British artist Aubrey Beardsley. Li Boyuan's *Wenming xiaoshi* ("A Short History of Civilization"), reprinted by the Commercial Press in 1906, and the fiction magazine he edited, *Xiuxiang xiaoshuo*, both had art nouveau-

like covers of this sort, although the latter was string-bound in the Chinese style. *Dongfang zazhi* ("Eastern Miscellany"), established in 1904, boasted a more strident cover design to suit its more worldly contents. It exploited well the top-to-bottom right-to-left arrangement of Chinese characters within an essentially Western format. During the subsequent decade, covers became even more elaborate. Frequently cited examples are those reproduced in Zhang Jinglu's compendia on the history of Chinese publishing, including *Science* (1915) and the leftist *New Youth* (1915).⁵

Funü zazhi ("Ladies Journal"), founded in 1915, repeatedly revised its look. In its first year, it was decorated with color lithographs of women engaged in arts and crafts, in style rather similar to how-to manuals of the period.⁶ By its fourth year these had been replaced by black-and-white reproductions of landscape paintings by Wu Shujuan (the most famous female painter in early twentieth-century Shanghai), bordered by textile patterns in color. Presumably these were intended to be more Chinese, thereby asserting a new cultural claim for the journal's contents.

MODERN DESIGN

The proliferation of artistically creative cover designs is usually attributed to the May Fourth Movement, and particularly to the circle around the writer Lu Xun (1881–1936).⁷ Lu was himself a talented amateur in the practice of design, and his part in the effort to promote good design was significant. Lu designed the cover for his *Stories from Foreign Countries* (*Yuwai xiaoshuoji*), published by the Commercial Press in 1909, with calligraphy commissioned from Chen Hengque (fig. 2). Although it looks rather old-fashioned compared with later developments, it testifies to his close involvement with the visual aesthetics of the book and shows his awareness of the power of understatement. Lu's elegant 1923 design for a translation of fairy tales entitled *Taose de yun* ("Peach-Colored Cloud") (cat. 75) plays with the language of the title, printing a motif of Han period (206 BCE–220 CE) cloud scrolls in the rosy hues of the title.

An anonymously designed cover of the same year (formerly in Lu's personal

collection) employed some of the same principles (cat. 74) for the inaugural issue of *Guoxue jikan* ("National Learning and Culture"), a scholarly journal published at Beijing University. The university, the journal title, and the issue appear in calligraphy by Cai Yuanpei printed over a series of decoratively arranged archaistic motifs. In its all-over background, this cover rather resembles the more garish paper wrapper used by Wu Jiayou for his pictorial magazine; its use of archaistic motifs specifically echoes the less well executed practices of the Commercial Press, as well as the conventions of Japanese journal design.

Connections with Japan were even more crucial to commercial design than to oil painting. Many of the art students who went to Japan were sent by their families for very practical reasons—to master modern methods of fabric design and printing in order to update antiquated Chinese textile production practices that may have originated centuries earlier. Among the artists who visited Japan for this purpose were Li Shutong in 1905 and Zhang Daqian a generation later. Innovations in textile production were closely related to those in the printing industry: both had major aesthetic components, and both were attempts to modernize enterprises of particular importance to the traditional gentry of Jiangnan.

Chen Zhifo (1895–1962) is particularly important as China's first professional graphic designer. His body of work well illustrates the stylistic changes that took place throughout the industry beginning in the late 1920s, although its quality is not as consistently high as that of his younger colleague Qian Juntao. Chen was born in 1895 to a once-prosperous gentry family in Xushanzhen, Zhejiang, near Hangzhou Bay.⁸ His father invested some family capital to open first a drugstore, then several fabric-dyeing shops. Chen, after attending a variety of new- and old-style schools, entered Zhejiang Technical School (*Zhejiang gongye zhuanmen xueyao*), where he learned English, mechanics, dyeing, and weaving. Upon graduation in 1916 he was retained as an instructor. Two years later, he passed a provincial examination for study in

Japan, and with partial support from his employer he entered the Tokyo Academy of Arts in 1919 as the first foreign student of design. During his stay in Tokyo, which overlapped those of Chen Baoyi, Guan Liang, and Ni Yide, he established friendships with fellow artists Feng Zikai (1898–1975) and Ding Yanyong (1902–1978).

Chen Zhifo returned home in 1923 to resume his teaching post, but found that the school's director had died and the design department was disbanded. He settled in Shanghai, where he took a job teaching design at the Shanghai Oriental Arts School (*Shanghai dongfang yishu zhuanmen xueyao*). At the same time he set up a commercial design company with the intention of training fabric designers for work in Shanghai's new enterprises. A broken contract caused him to lose money at this business, but he succeeded in educating a number of young designers.

Chen received substantial design commissions himself during this period. His book design is usually informed by his interest in pattern (which more than one commentator has sought to associate with traditional Chinese geometric architectural ornament). His most interesting works of the 1920s are indeed the most highly patterned examples. Beginning in 1925, at editor Hu Yuzhi's invitation, he designed covers for *Eastern Miscellany* continuously for six years, from volume 22 through volume 27. He also designed covers for *Xiaoshuo yuebao* ("Short Story Monthly") in 1927 (volume 18). These are far from his most successful efforts, but they do succeed in differentiating the focuses of the two magazines by showing (to cite just two examples) ancient Egyptians on a cover of the former and a nude girl with butterflies on one issue of the latter. For the covers of *Short Story Monthly* much of the effort seems to have gone into the typography—actually hand-drawn "modern"-style Chinese characters (*meishuzi*)—which is ambitious in its variety.⁹

Interest in lettering reaches something of an extreme in Chen's highly abstract and patterned covers for *Xiandai xuesheng* ("Modern Student") in 1931, in which an evocation of feminine beauty, motifs of geometricized flora, and abstract patterns of lines are combined



Figure 5. Cover design by Tao Yuanqing (1893–1929) for Lu Xun's Tomb (*Fen*). 1927. Lu Xun Museum, Shanghai.



Figure 6. Cover design by Lu Xun (1881–1936) for his Call to Arms (*Nahan*). 1926. Lu Xun Museum, Shanghai.

with almost illegible lettering.¹⁰

The times and the artist had clearly changed in the eight years between 1927 and 1935, when he began doing modernist designs for *Wenxue yuekan* ("Literary Monthly"). Like most other graphic design in this period, his work here seems to converge around various kinds of Cubist, mechanical, or Art Deco imagery. Anonymous covers of the period, such as the one for *Bernard Shaw in Shanghai* (cat. 84), share this quality.

In addition to his magazine covers, Chen also designed many book jackets for the Kaiming and Tianma book companies, work that shows his strength as a designer. His own book of textile patterns was published by Kaiming in 1929, with a dramatic cover of his own design. He wrote what is believed to be China's first graphic design textbook, *Tu'an fa ABC* ("ABC of Design Method"), published by World Book Company the following year and reissued at least six times.

Chuangzuo de jingyan ("Experience in Creation"), by Lu Xun, Mao Dun, Yu Dafu, and others, was published by Tianma in 1933 with a cover featuring calligraphy by Lu and an architectural pattern by Chen. Also in 1933 Chen did the abstract cover design and Lu the title calligraphy for the latter's *Zixuanji* ("Self-Selected Collection"). This was a volume in the Tianma authors series: in the same series books by Mao Dun and Guo Moruo also bear covers by Chen.¹¹

As a pioneer in the field of graphic design, Chen may have produced a somewhat less coherent body of work than some of his younger colleagues, but the designs he created between about 1929 and 1937 possess great calm and elegance and show a strong affinity for contemporary Japanese aesthetics. He taught in Shanghai and Guangzhou with his Tokyo friends Guan Liang and Ni Yide, but after World War II he devoted himself primarily to flower-and-bird painting.

Chen's contemporary Tao Yuanqing (1893–1929) was even more interested in Japanese design, although trained entirely in China. Tao worked at the *Shanghai shibaoguan* ("Shanghai Times"); through the good offices of his superior, Ge Gongzhen, he was able to study art in private collections. He is said to have

learned also from the antique paintings and Japanese and Indian designs owned by the Youzheng Book Company. Later, at Shanghai Arts Normal School, he studied Western painting under Feng Zikai, who absorbed Japanese influence from Li Shutong, and Chen Baoyi, who had trained in Japan. He was thus considered knowledgeable in Chinese painting, Oriental patterns, and Western painting.

Tao seems to have begun designing modern Western-style book covers in 1924, with a commission from Lu Xun, and is considered a formative figure in the movement. His first cover was for Lu Xun's Chinese translation of the Japanese novel *Symbol of Depression* (fig. 4), by Kuriyagawa Hakuson.¹² Tao was introduced to Lu by the Chinese writer Xu Qinwen, whom he had met at the Shaoxing Native Place Association in Beijing. Lu was eminently satisfied with Tao's design for *Symbol of Depression*, while Xu considered it a seminal work for the new literature.¹³ Tao went on to design other covers for *Weiming she* and Beixin Book Company publications, including one for Xu's story collection *Guxiang* ("Hometown"), published in 1926 (cat. 77). His style, in its simplicity, asymmetry, and sometimes casual quality, has a strong Japanese flavor (see also cat. 76).

Lu wrote prefatory wall texts for Tao Yuanqing's two Western-style exhibitions, held in 1925 and 1927. Tao, who died at the age of thirty-six, had only a five-year career as a designer, and has been almost completely forgotten as a painter.¹⁴ His early death in 1929 coincided with a general change in Chinese book design, and with a new stage in the work of his friend and colleague Qian Juntao.

Qian Juntao was largely responsible for recording and analyzing his friend's contributions to Chinese design, beginning with the 1924 commission for Lu Xun.¹⁵ He divided Tao's work into two general categories. One consists of covers that are essentially decorative, such as those for Lu's translations of Kuriyagawa Hakuson's *Symbol of Depression* and *Out of the Ivory Tower* (cat. 76) and for Lu's 1927 anthology *A Collection of Tang and Song Tales*.¹⁶ In the other group, also designed for Lu, the images are related to the content of the books, or at least to their titles. That group includes his covers for



Figure 7. Cover design by Qian Juntao (b. 1906) for Xie Liuyi, *Literary Arts and Sex* (*Wenyi yu xing'ai*). 1928. Collection of the artist.



Figure 8. Cover design by Qian Juntao (b. 1906) for Guo Moruo (lyrics) and Chen Xiaokong (music), *Mi sang suolopu zhi ye*. 1929. Collection of the artist.

the story collections *Wandering* (1926) (cat. 78), *The Tomb* (1927) (fig. 5), and *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk* (1928).¹⁷ In his letter of request to the artist, Lu specified that the design for *The Tomb* not relate to a grave. The pattern of tomb mounds that Tao created evidently ignored this mandate, but the highly abstract work satisfied Lu Xun.¹⁸

Lu Xun (1881–1936), best known for scathing social and political criticism in fictional form that inspired many left-wing activists, was a patron of design artists, commissioning their work and on occasion fighting for the integrity of their designs. In a letter of 1926 to Li Jiye, Lu complained that Tao Yuanqing's original color had been printed incorrectly in the second edition of *Wandering*, leaving the author embarrassed to commission new work from him. The designer whose color values had been falsified, he said, must feel as badly as an author whose text had been mangled.¹⁹

Later, according to Qian Juntao, Lu Xun began advocating the use of native imagery in some designs so as to create a particularly Chinese style. This is indeed one of several different trends seen in his work of the 1920s and 1930s. His 1923 design

for *Peach-Colored Cloud* borrows Han motifs; his later design for *Exploring the Heart* (cat. 79) reveals a more sophisticated use of the entire picture space, but is similarly based upon rubbings of antique motifs.²⁰ Lu Xun designed his own covers for the two editions of his *Nahan* ("Call to Arms") (fig. 6), including the lettering (*meishuzi*).²¹ For *Fen* ("The Tomb"), Lu designed the typography to use with Tao Yuanqing's picture. Other designers with whom Lu worked in the late 1920s include Situ Qiao, for *Mangyuan* ("Wilderness"), and Sun Fuxi, for his 1927 prose-poetry collection *Yecao* ("Wild Grass").²²

Lu frequently wrote the calligraphy for the titles of his own and other author's books, a common practice. He was particularly interested in nontraditional, modern-style characters (*meishuzi*) and designed a number of covers consisting of such characters alone. He provided the calligraphy for the cover of his *Wild Grass*, and he designed a simple cover for his *Sequel to Unlucky Star*, using just three Song-style characters and a seal.²³ He participated in the design of a number of the publications he edited: *Benliu* ("Running Stream") of 1928, *Mengya yuekan* ("Sprouts") of 1930 (cat. 82), the 1934 woodcut anthology *Muke jicheng* ("Woodcut Progress"), and the anthology of Kaethe Kollwitz's prints that he published in 1936.²⁴ He has recently been identified as the designer of the cover of *Sprouts* in the current exhibition.

Perhaps even better that Chen Zhifo, his younger colleague Qian Juntao exemplifies the emergence in the mid and late 1920s of the professional designer. Although Qian was not among the first to consider design a profession, he was perhaps the first to devote his entire life, from teens to old age, to its practice. Based on the quality, quantity, and innovativeness of his design, he might also be considered the most important.

Qian was unusual for his time in being trained entirely in China. He emerged, however, from a talented cohort, mostly Zhejiang natives, who shared an interest in modern Japanese technology and aesthetics. He was born in Tongxiang county, Zhejiang, into a typical gentry family of traditional education—the grandson of a physician.²⁵ In 1923, at the



Figure 9. Cover design by Qian Juntao (b. 1906) for Student (*Xuesheng zazhi*), vol. 18, no. 1 (1929). Collection of the artist.

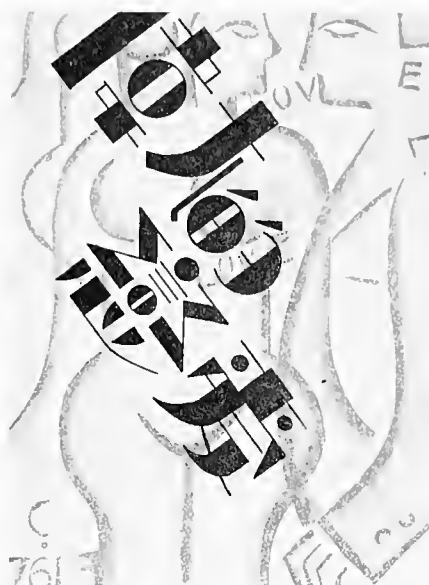


Figure 10. Cover design by Qian Juntao (b. 1906) for Great Love (*Weida de lian'ai*), 1930. Collection of the artist.

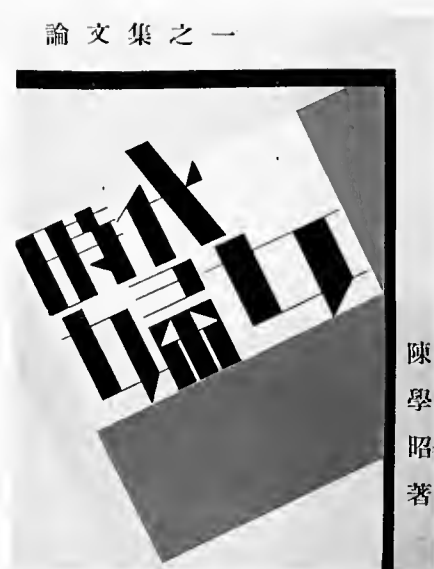


Figure 11. Cover design by Qian Juntao (b. 1906) for Chen Xuezhao, *Woman of the Times* (*Shidai funü*), 1930. Collection of the artist.

age of seventeen, he enrolled at the Shanghai Arts Normal School (*Yishu shifan xuexiao*), where he studied design, music, and painting with disciples of Li Shutong (1880–1942), especially Wu Mengfei, Liu Zhiping, and Feng Zikai.²⁶ Feng was a particularly strong influence on him, in music as well as in art (see cats. 50, 51), and Feng was on the board of directors of Kaiming Book Company in 1925 when Qian was hired there for his first job in publishing.²⁷ Qian worked first as their music editor, but soon became a dominant figure in the design of their publications. He later ran the Wanye ("Myriad Leaves") Book Company, which published many music and art titles.

Qian Juntao met Lu Xun in 1927, when Lu visited the director of Kaiming Book Company. When Lu admired one of Qian's cover designs, he was introduced to the young artist. He subsequently invited Qian and Tao Yuanqing to view his collection of rubbings of Han pictorial reliefs, and also introduced them to the Uchiyama Bookstore, which served as a kind of unofficial headquarters for his literary and social activities.²⁸

By that time Qian was beginning to establish his reputation as a professional designer. In September 1928, in a practice

similar to that established among *guohua* painters, his teacher Feng Zikai drafted a price list for Qian's designs. It was published in several journals—including *Dushu zazhi* ("Reader's Magazine," vol. 2, no. 23), and *Xin nüxing* ("New Woman")—and separately as a flyer, under the names of a number of his prominent supporters in the literary and art worlds.²⁹ The text reads, in part:

The design of a book greatly influences the mood of those reading it. A fine book design may symbolize the contents, and can prepare people's mood and attitude for the reading before they even open it. Like the overture of an opera, it can stimulate the feelings of the viewers, and get them in tune with the mood of the drama. . . . A good designer can . . . transform the spirit of the contents into form and color, to stimulate a feeling of beauty in the viewer and increase the interest of reading. Our friend Qian Juntao is good at painting and especially excellent in book design. His cover designs are all the rage and are placed in the display windows of every bookshop. . . . Today, because more and more people come from all directions to seek his designs, with our purpose of elevating art and attracting readers, we have



Figure 12. Cover design by Qian Juntao (b. 1906) for Killing Beauty (*Shayan*), 1930. Collection of the artist.



Figure 13. Cover design by Qian Juntao (b. 1906) for Literary Monthly (*Wenxue yuebao*), vol. 1, no. 1, 1932. Collection of the artist.

encouraged Mr. Qian to widely accept commissions from all fields, and thus we set his price list.³³

Qian Juntao is particularly important for the quality of his graphic design and his influence on younger designers. Among those he influenced, the absence of nineteenth-century European design prototypes—the Beardsley manner—is notable. Instead, they cultivated a simplicity associated with Japanese design and later with European modernist design. Equally influential may have been Qian's attitude toward the new metier of book design. Unlike many commercial artists, Qian has been proud of his reputation as a professional book designer and has sought to promote the reputations of designers whom he admired, such as Tao Yuanqing.

Qian's early style, especially in the 1920s, had a somewhat Japanese flavor.³⁴ In that period he employed primarily vegetal motifs, or occasionally, like Tao Yuanqing, images from archaeology. Fellow designers consider Qian particularly accomplished in printing technology, which enabled him to obtain the images he conceived. Covers of this kind, all published by Kaiping, include Zhou Zuoren's *Liangtiao xuelang* ("Two Trails of

Blood"), 1927; Zheng Zhenduo's *Shanzhong zaji* ("Notes from the Mountains"), 1928; and Xie Liuyi's *Wenyi yu xing'ai* ("Literary Arts and Sex"), 1928 (fig. 7).³⁵

The year 1929 marks a shift in Qian's work and an expansion of his repertoire. He continued refining his use of vegetal motifs, creating lyrical work that is never sweet, as in the series of covers with seasonal motifs for *New Woman* (ed. Zhang Xichen).³⁶ Other work of that year self-consciously adopts Chinese prototypes, as in the rather plain cover for Chen Wanli's photo album *Minshisan zhi gugong* ("The Palace in the Thirteenth Year of the Republic") and the flamboyant cover for an anthology of Guo Moruo's poetry (set to music by Chen Xiaokong), which has folk paper-cut motifs as its pattern (see fig. 8).³⁷ A more significant trend was the gradual shift away from organic imagery to more crisply defined abstract compositions, as in his cover for Rou Shi's *Three Sisters*.³⁸ Some of this work is close to the style of the contemporary Japanese designer Sugiura Hisui. In the most extreme experiments of this sort, he used typography or lettering as design motifs, as in the 1929 cover for *Xuesheng zazhi* ("Student") (fig. 9).³⁹ This trend, again, was widespread in the design of the period and parallels similar experiments in Japanese design. The elimination or distortion of the figure so as to preclude sentimentality, a standard modernist strategy, became prevalent in the art of this group, as did the steadily increasing interest in lettering as a motif of abstract design. Qian's work of the 1930s exemplifies this trend more and more strongly. The most notable examples are his covers for *Weida de lian'ai* ("Great Love"), Chen Xuezhao's *Shidai funü* ("Woman of the Times"), and *Shayan* ("Killing Beauty") (figs. 10, 11, 12). The cover for *Wenxue xuebao* ("Literary Digest") of 1932, edited by Zhou Yang, and for Ba Jin's *Xinsheng* ("New Life") of 1933 play with abstract textures that maintain a mechanical anonymity but still give an organic or accidental feeling (see figs. 13, 14). The artist rubbed his pigment over a stone surface to create the grainy texture.⁴⁰ This kind of image remains fresh even sixty years later. Qian continued to play with lettering in his reworking of a Russian cover in 1933 (cat. 83).



Figure 14. Cover design by Qian Juntao (b. 1906) for Ba Jin, *New Life* (Xinsheng), 1933. Collection of the artist.



Figure 15. Cover design by Qian Juntao (b. 1906) for *The Heart of the Widow* (Guafu de xin), 1934. Collection of the artist.

Russian Constructivism was a strong influence on his work in this period, as the latter work testifies. Cubism soon assumed equal importance, as in a series of works of the mid-thirties, including the 1934 *Guafu de xin* ("Heart of the Widow") (fig. 15), and in a collection of harmonica tunes he edited in 1935. For Ba Jin's *Siqu de taiyang* ("Dead Sun"), published by Kaiming in 1935, he employed a geometric design filled with Chinese and Esperanto. Both the title and pen name appear in Esperanto: *Mortanta Suno* and Baccio.

By the time of the Japanese invasion of 1937 Qian, like many of his colleagues, was strongly drawn to modernist design, a trend that had swept the Shanghai publishing world, as one can see from the work of other artists.

VARIOUS MIDDLEBROW MAGAZINE COVER DESIGNS

Certainly the artists discussed above did not have a monopoly on good design, reputation, or prosperity, but can serve to represent the general trends of the period. Mo Zhiheng—with Feng Zikai and Qian Juntao the third major designer to

work at the Kaiming Book Company—created some wonderful modern designs in the 1930s, such as his cover for Ba Jin's *Jia* ("Family") (fig. 16). Designers for more middlebrow, mass-market publishers similarly gravitated toward modernist imagery by the mid-1930s, but their work remained a great deal more varied. Many of them continued the art nouveau trends of the late nineteenth century, a style condemned by Lu Xun, but one that seems to have enduring popular appeal.³⁰ Liangyou's movie magazine, *Yingxing*, published both kinds of covers: in 1926 an elegantly line-drawn lady with Japanese floral draperies, and in 1927 a nude by Wan Laiming, this one Cubistically fragmented. *Ladies Journal* tended toward somewhat more sentimental renderings in the Art Nouveau manner. *Shanghai Sketch* featured a variety of covers, ranging from pulp melodrama to modern design. *Dianying yuebao* ("Movie Monthly"), published in 1928 and 1929, offered a range of styles, all dramatic. The later *Mingxing*, another movie magazine, adapted the geometries of the modernist idiom to its own particular needs.³¹

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the Chinese art world during the 1920s and 1930s continually debated its future direction, with advocates of innovative neo-traditionalism, academic realism, and modernism vying for social, economic, and institutional recognition. Largely unburdened by the Chinese artist's long-term cultural mission, but instead responding more to the needs of the present, and specifically to the various requirements of the publishers, the authors, and the book-consuming public, commercial artists produced strikingly modern visual images. Although some designers wrote about their practice, they had little need to formulate theoretical justifications of their work, for they were tested in the daily production of their art. Unlike the literati painters or the oil painters, a steady production of immediately appealing work was both their livelihood and their gauge of success. The rapid and continuous evolution in the styles of their book-cover designs bespeaks an increasingly sophisticated and modern cohort of artists, publishers, and audience.



Figure 16. Cover design by Mo Zhiheng for Ba Jin, *Family (Jia)*. Reproduced in Qiu Ling, *Shuji zhuangzhen yishu jianshi* (Harbin: Heilongjiang People's Publishing House, 1984), p. 26.

The significance of modernist visual art to twentieth-century China may not be entirely clear if one limits one's gaze to oil painting, which was patronized primarily by the academic establishment.⁴⁰ If we expand our vision to include commercial design, however, we discover the existence of a fully cosmopolitan sector within the pluralistic visual culture of prewar China. Modern Chinese design, publishing, and consumption had unique local characteristics, but we conclude that Chinese artists, particularly those in Shanghai, were fully mature practitioners of an up-to-date international design vocabulary. They served not only a modern industry, but also China's increasingly modern urban cultural consumers.

NOTES

1. Two slightly different recent reproductions of the *Lixian jiupai* are presumed to be taken from the original 1854 edition. Both differ in minor details from the exhibited example. The reproductions are *Lixian jiupai* (Beijing: People's Art Publishing House, 1987), which bears comments on each page by Yao Xie, and *Lixian jiupai* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1995), which does not.
2. Roswell S. Britton, *The Chinese Periodical Press, 1800-1912* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, Ltd., 1933), pp. 63-71.
3. This perceptive comment is used by Roswell Britton, p. 70, to describe the *Dianshizhai huabao*.
4. See Qiu Ling, *Shuji zhuangzhen yishu jianshi* ("A Short History of Chinese Book Design") (Harbin: Heilongjiang People's Publishing House, 1984).
5. Zhang Jinglu, *Zhongguo jindai chubanshili* ("Modern Chinese Publishing") (reprint; n.p., n.d.).
6. Lithographed books printed on high-acid Western-style paper were often still string-bound in this period. A typical how-to book of the 1910s features a lithographed color drawing of a woman in an interior on the cover. The pages are printed on one side and folded, as in a traditional woodblock-printed book.
7. See Qian Juntao, "Preface," in *Lu Xun yu shuji zhuangzhen* ("Lu Xun and Book Design") (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Art Publishing House, 1981), pp. 1-3; and "Zhongguo shuji zhuangzhen yishu fazhan huigu" ("Retrospective of the Development of the Chinese Art of Book Design"), in *Qian Juntao zhuangzhen yishu* ("Qian Juntao's Art of Design"), ed. Sima Loufu
8. His biography is taken from Li Youguang and Chen Xiufan, *Chen Zhifao yanjiu* ("Chen Zhifao Researches") (Nanjing, 1990), pp. 1-33.
9. Reproductions of these covers appear in Li and Chen, *Chen Zhifao Researches*, figs. 26-31.
10. See Scott Minick and Jiao Ping, *Chinese Graphic Design in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1990).
11. *Lu Xun's Self-Selected Collection* (*Zixuanji*), with title calligraphy by Lu Xun (Shanghai: Tianma shudian, 1933).
12. Kuriyagawa Hakuson, *Symbol of Depression*, trans. Lu Xun as *Kumen de xiangzheng* (Beijing: Weiming she, 1924).
13. Qiu Ling, *Chinese Book Design*, p. 75. He does not cite his source.
14. A native of Shaoxing, he taught at National Hangzhou Arts Academy. See Yu Jianhua, *Zhongguo meishujia renming cidian* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Art Publishing House, 1981), p. 960, which cites Jiang Danshu.
15. See Qian Juntao, "Preface," in *Lu Xun and Book Design*, p. 2. Tao and the much younger Qian Juntao were classmates in Shanghai and both taught at Zhejiang Provincial No. 6 Middle School.
16. Kuriyagawa Hakuson, *Out of the Ivory Tower*, trans. Lu Xun as *Chule xiangya zhi ta* (Beijing: Weiming she, 1925); *Tang Song chuanqi ji* ("A Collection of Tang and Song Tales"), ed. Lu Xun (Shanghai: Beixin shuju, 1927), vol. 1. Reproduced in *Lu Xun and Book Design*, pls. 38, 19.
17. Lu Xun, *Chaochua zishi* ("Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk") (Beijing: Weiming she, 1928); *Panghuang* ("Wandering") (Beijing: Beixin shuju, 1926); *Fen* ("The Tomb") (Beijing: Weiming she, 1927). Reproduced in *Lu Xun and Book Design*, pls. 15, 12, 13.
18. *Lu Xun and Book Design*, p. 2.
19. Qian Juntao, "Preface," *Lu Xun and Book Design*, p. 3.
20. Qiu Ling, *Chinese Book Design*, p. 69.
21. Lu Xun, *Nahan* ("Call to Arms") (Beijing: Xinchao chubanshe, 1923; Beijing: Beixin shuju, 1926).
22. Lu Xun, *Yecao* ("Wild Grass") (Beijing: Beixin Book Co., 1927). According to Qian Juntao, in *Qian Juntao zhuangzhen yishu* ("Qian Juntao's Art of Design"), ed. Sima Loufu and Xiao Yun (reprint; Shanghai: Shanghai Book Co., 1992), p. 17, other artists directly influenced by Lu Xun include Tao Yuanqing, Sun Fuxi, Situ Qiao, Chen Zhifao, Qian Juntao, and later Chi Ning, Shen Zhenhuang, Mo Zhiheng, and

Zheng Chuangu.

23. Lu Xun, *Huaguan, ruban* ("Unlucky Star, a Sequel") (Beijing: Beixin shuju, 1927).

24. *Running Stream (Benlu)*, no. 1, 1928, ed. Lu Xun, monthly (Beijing: Beixin shuju); *Muke ncheng*, ed. Lu Xun (Tiemu yishushe, 1931); and *Kaisui Kelchuzhi [Käthe Kollwitz] banhua xuan* (Sanxian shuwu, May 1936).

25. Other towns in Tongxiang produced Mao Dun and Feng Zikai.

26. *Qian Juntao de yishu shijie* ("The World of Qian Juntao's Art") (Shanghai: Shanghai Book Co., 1992), p. 1; and Luo Zhicang, "Qian Juntao shuji zhuangzhen fenge de fenqi" ("Periodization of Qian Juntao's Book Design Style"), in *The World of Qian Juntao's Art*, p. 43.

27. One source says that he started at *Xin nixing*, which then became *Kaiming*. *Kaiming* was not founded until 1927, according to Qiu Ling.

28. Huang Ke, "Qian Juntao ji qi shuji zhuangzhen," in *The World of Qian Juntao's Art*, p. 32.

29. Text transcribed in *The World of Qian Juntao's Art*, pp. 48–49. His supporters included Feng Zikai, Tao Yuanqing, Qiu Wanxiang, Hu Yuzhi, Chen Wangdao, Xia Mianzun, Chen Baoyi, Zhang Xichen, Ye Shengtao, and Wang Lixi.

30. Twenty years later, in the 1947 *China Art Yearbook*, Qian is listed as a commercial artist, one of 119 such professionals.

31. Qiu Ling, *Chinese Book Design*, p. 80. Luo Zhicang, "Periodization of Qian Juntao's Book Design Style," p. 42.

32. Images of the two covers not reproduced here appear in Qian Juntao, *Qian Juntao's Art of Design*, pp. 23, 28.

33. Reproduced in *ibid.*, pp. 8–11.

34. Reproduced in *ibid.*, p. 44.

35. Reproduced in *ibid.*, p. 74.

36. Also *Xiao shuo yue bao*, vol. 22, (New Year's issue) 1929. Zheng Zhenduo, ed. Commercial Press.

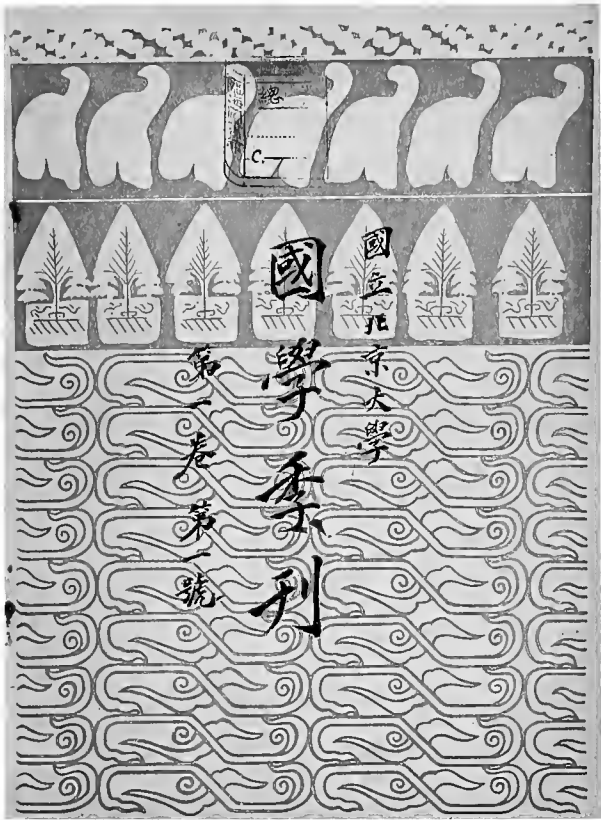
37. Of the cover for Ba Jin's *Xinsheng*, Qian wrote in *Qian Juntao's Art of Design*, p. 40, that he painted the shadow of a small plant growing from a crack, to symbolize the difficulty of growing up, and that he avoided brush strokes and photographic qualities. In regard to his use of *meishuzi*, he wrote: "Use of famous writers' calligraphy can be problematic to the overall design, unless you instruct them properly."

38. This style is still condemned, perhaps testimony to its ongoing popularity. See Steven Heller, *Cover Story: The Art of American Magazine Covers, 1900–1950* (San Francisco, 1996), who

writes of a 1921 *House and Garden* cover ornamented with a large white Manchurian crane (and rather similar in feel to the peacock cover of *Xinxiang xiaoshuo*), "Early covers were obsessively ornamental in the manner of art nouveau and anticipated the excesses of art deco," p. 22. 39. I am grateful to the Hong Kong critic and film scholar Paul Fonoroff for permitting me to study part of his collection of Chinese cinema publications.

40. See Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 62–64. Despite his friendship with a key modernist, Pang Xunqin, Sullivan expresses disappointment in the results of the avant-garde Storm Society's efforts.

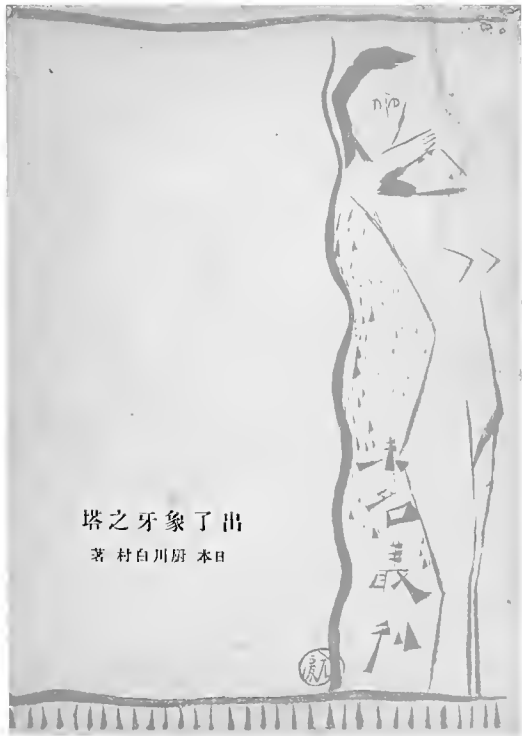
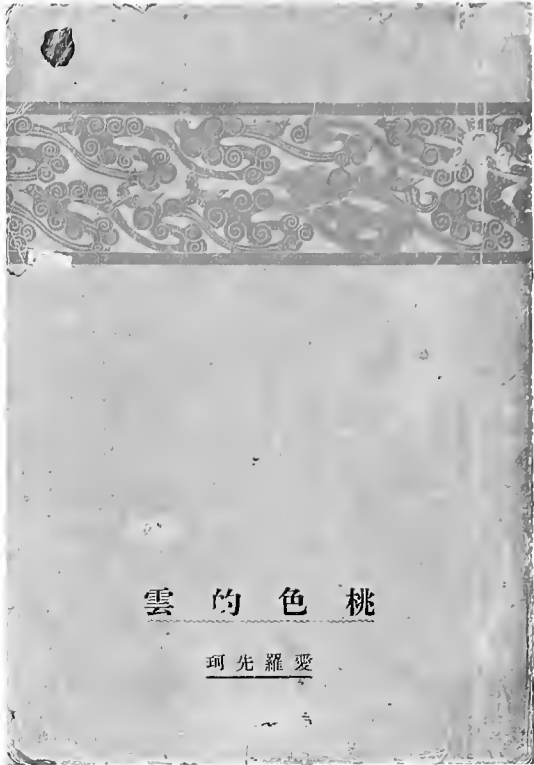
74. Anonyms designer,
with title calligraphy by
Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940)
Cover design for *National
Learning and Culture*
(*Guoxue jikan*), vol. 1, no. 1
(January 1923), published by
Beijing University
1923
25.7 x 18.5 cm
Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



75. **Lu Xun** (1881–1936)
Cover design for *Peach-
Colored Cloud* (*Taose de yun*)
Translated by Lu Xun;
published by Xinchao
Publishers, Beijing
1923
19.1 x 13.2 cm
Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai

76. **Tao Yuanqing** (1893–1929)
Cover design for *Out of the
Ivory Tower* (*Chule riangya
zhi ta*), essays by Kuriyagawa
Hakuson, translated by Lu
Xun; published by Weiming
she, Beijing
1925
19.4 x 13.5 cm
Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai

77. **Tao Yuanqing** (1893–1929)
Cover design for *Hometown*
(*Guriang*), stories by Xu
Qinwen, edited by Lu Xun;
published by Beixin Book
Company, Beijing
1926
20 x 14 cm
Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



78. **Tao Yuanqing** (1893-1929)
Cover design for *Wandering*
(*Panghuang*), short stories
by Lu Xun; published by
Beixin Book Company,
Beijing
1926
19.5 x 13.7 cm
Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



78

79. **Lu Xun** (1881-1936)
Cover design for *Exploring the*
Heart, text by Chang Hong,
edited by Lu Xun; published
by Beixin Book Company,
Beijing
1926
20.5 x 14 cm
Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai

80. **Anonymous designer**
Cover design for *On Art*,
essay by Anatoly
Lunacharsky, translated by
Lu Xun; published by
Dajiang Bookstore, Shanghai
1929
19 x 13.2 cm
Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai

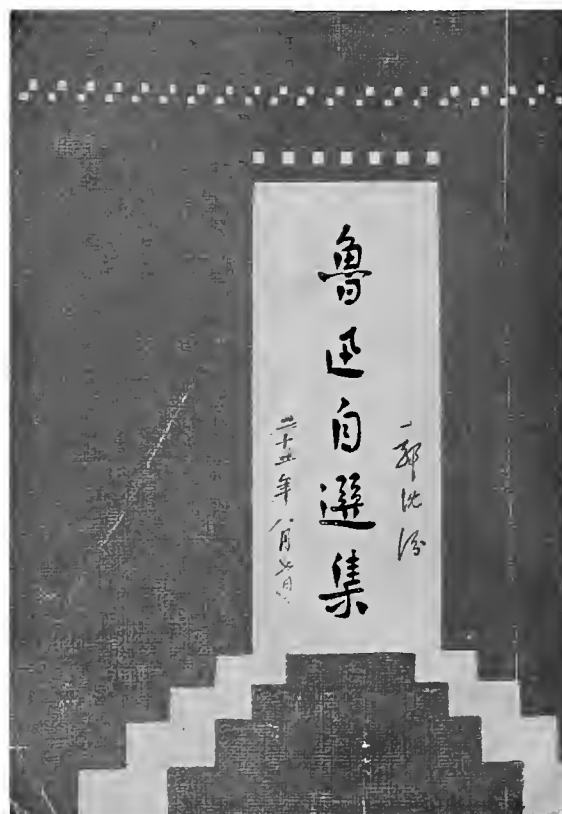


79

81. **Chen Zhifo** (1895-1962)
Cover design for *Lu Xun,*
Self-Selected Collection,
published by Tianma
Bookstore, Shanghai
1933
18.5 x 13 cm
Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



80



81

82. Lu Xun (1881–1936)

Cover design for *Sprouts* (*Mengya yuekan*), edited by Lu Xun, vol. 1, no. 1 (January 1930); published by Guanghai Book Company, Shanghai
1930
20.7 x 15.4 cm
Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



82

83. Qian Juntao (b. 1906)

Cover design adapted for *October*, translated by Lu Xun; published by Shenzhou Guoguang Press, Shanghai
1933
18.5 x 13.3 cm
Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai

84. Anonymous designer

Cover design for *Bernard Shaw in Shanghai*, text compiled by Lu Xun and Qu Qiubai; published by Wild Grasses Bookstore, Shanghai
1933
21 x 13.5 cm
Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



83



84

85. Tang Yingwei (b. 1915)

Forward!

1936

Cover of *Woodcut World*, vol. 4 (1936),
special issue for the National Traveling
Woodcut Exhibition, published by
Modern Woodcut Society, Guangzhou
26.4 x 19.3 cm

Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



85

86. Tang Yingwei (b. 1915)

Trailblazing

1936

Cover of *Woodcut World*, vol. 3 (1936),
published by Modern Woodcut Society,
Guangzhou
26 x 18.8 cm

Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



86

87. Tang Yingwei (b. 1915)
Chrysanthemum
 1936
 Cover of *Modern Woodcut*,
 vol. 15 (1936)
 Woodcut; 28 x 24 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai

88. Attributed to Huang Xinbo
 (1915–1980)
 Title page of *Selected Wood-
 cuts of the Weiming Society*
 1934
 31 x 23 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai

89. Lai Shaoqi (b. 1915)
Breaking Out
 1936
 Cover of *Modern Woodcut*,
 vol. 16 (1936)
 Woodcut; 27.5 x 23.5 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai

90. Li Hua (1907–1994)
Street Sweepers
 1935
 Cover of *Modern Woodcut*,
 vol. 3 (1935)
 Woodcut; 25.7 x 19.2 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



87



88



89



90

91. Chen Tiegeng (1908–1970)
*Glimpse of the Esperanto
 Exhibition*
 1933
 In *Woodblock Prints*, vol. 1,
 no. 1 (1933)
 9 x 14 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



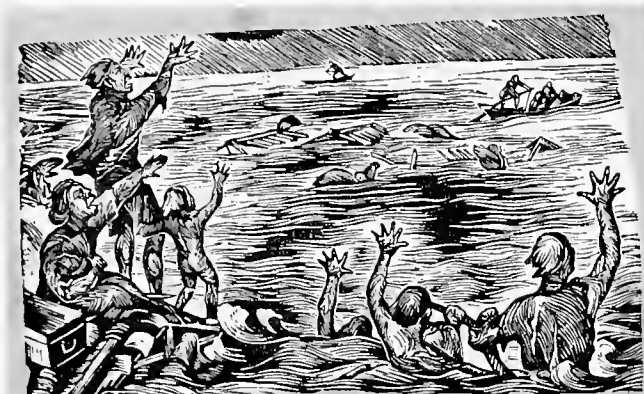
91

92. Jiang Feng (1910–1982)
The Trial
 1936
 In *Steel-Horse Woodcuts*, vol. 2
 (1936)
 Woodcut; 11.8 x 13.4 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai

93. Wo Zha (1905–1974)
Flooding
 1936
 In *Steel-Horse Woodcuts*, vol. 1
 (1936)
 Woodcut; 7.6 x 13.1 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



92



93

94. **Li Hua** (1907–1994)
Drizzle, from the series
The Suburbs in Spring
 1935
 Polychromatic woodcut;
 15.9 x 12.4 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



94

95. **Chen Tiegeng** (1908–1970)
Waiting
 1933
 In *Huilan Woodcuts*, vol.1
 (1935)
 12.8 x 11 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



95

96. **Chen Yanqiao**
 (1911–1969/1970)
Security Tower
 1936
 In *Woodcut Circle*, vol. 1 (1936)
 12 x 12 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



96

97. **Chen Yanqiao**
 (1911–1969/1970)
Going to Work
 Undated [1930s]
 Woodcut; 30 x 24.5 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



97



96



97

98. Li Hua (1907-1994)

China, Roar!

1936

In *Modern Woodcut*, vol. 14 (1936)

Woodcut; 23 x 16.5 cm

Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



99. Hu Yichuan (b. 1910)

To the Front!

1932

Woodcut: 23.2 x 30.5 cm

Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



100. Li Hua (1907–1994)
Brooding
 1935
 In *Modern Woodcut*, vol. 7
 (1935)
 Polychromatic woodcut;
 16 x 12 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



100

101. Liu Xian (1915–1990)
A Lady
 1935
 In *Modern Woodcut*, vol. 5
 (1935)
 Woodcut; 14.5 x 13 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



101

102. Tang Yingwei (b. 1915)
A Blue Memory
 1935
 In *Modern Woodcut*, vol. 6
 Woodcut, 15 x 12.7 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



102

103. **Zhang Wang** (1915–1992)
Head Wound
 1934
 Woodcut; 24.3 x 15.2 cm
 Jiangsu Provincial Art
 Gallery, Nanjing



104. **Tang Yingwei** (b. 1915)
Devils
 Undated [1930s]
 Woodcut; 15 x 20 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai

105. **Zhang Hui**
 (dates unknown)
The Beggar Has No Clothing
 Undated
 Woodcut; 15.5 x 13 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



104

106. **He Baitao** (1913–1939)
On the Streets
 1933
 Woodcut; 27 x 21.2 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai

103



105



106

107. Liu Xian (1915–1990)
The Prisoner
 Undated
 Woodcut; 27 x 19 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



107

108. Zhang Wang (1915–1992)
China's Dictator
 1933
 Woodcut; 17 x 12.4 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



108

109. Li Pingfau (b. 1922)
Starving People
 1939
 Woodcut; 21.5 x 14.5 cm
 Jiangsu Provincial Art
 Gallery, Nanjing



109

110. Tang Yingwei (b. 1915)
The Homeless
 Ca. 1936
 Woodcut; 22.5 x 34.2 cm
 Lu Xun Memorial, Shanghai



110

111. **Liu Xian** (1915–1990)
*Consolidate Our Unity, Fight
the Japanese Aggressors to the
End*
1938
Woodcut; 11 x 12 cm
Jiangsu Provincial Art
Gallery, Nanjing



111

112. **Huang Xinbo** (1915–1980)
He Hasn't Really Gone
1941
Woodcut; 14 x 18 cm
Chinese National Art
Gallery, Beijing



112

113. Yan Han (b. 1916)
*New Year Door Guardian:
 A People's Fighter (Cooperation
 Between the Army and the
 People)*
 1939–1940
 Woodcut; 37 x 28.5 cm
 Gift of Professor and Mrs.
 Theodore Herman, Picker Art
 Gallery, Colgate University



113

114. Zhao Yunnan (b. 1924)
Rice Riot
 1947
 Woodcut; 27.8 x 25.6 cm
 Gift of Professor and
 Mrs. Theodore Herman,
 Picker Art Gallery, Colgate
 University



114

115. Long Tingba (b. 1916)
Widow and Orphan
 1916
 Woodcut; 16.2 x 9 cm
 Gift of Professor and
 Mrs. Theodore Herman,
 Picker Art Gallery, Colgate
 University



116

116. Gu Yuan (1919–1996)
Marriage Registration
 1944
 Woodcut; 14.1 x 19.5 cm
 Gift of Professor and
 Mrs. Theodore Herman,
 Picker Art Gallery, Colgate
 University



115

117. Li Hua (1907–1994)

When the Requisition Officers Leave

1946

Woodcut; 23.5 x 33.5 cm

Gift of Professor and Mrs. Theodore
Herman, Picker Art Gallery, Colgate
University



(FAG)

118. Li Hua (1907–1994)

Take Him In!

1946

Woodcut; 21.5 x 32.5 cm

Gift of Professor and Mrs. Theodore
Herman, Picker Art Gallery, Colgate
University



119. Ding Cong (b. 1916)

Images of Today

1944

Gouache on paper; 149.3 x 28.6 cm

Spencer Museum of Art, University
of Kansas (Gift of William P. Fenn)





120. Yang Keyang (b. 1914)
The Professor
 1947
 Woodcut; 21.8 x 16.2 cm
 Gift of Professor and
 Mrs. Theodore Herman,
 Picker Art Gallery, Colgate
 University

121. Yang Kewu (act. 1940s)
Oppose Press Censorship
 Undated [1940s]
 Woodcut; 23.1 x 16.6 cm
 Gift of Professor and
 Mrs. Theodore Herman,
 Picker Art Gallery, Colgate
 University

122. Yang Nawei (1912–1982)
Silence Is the Best Defense
 1947
 Woodcut; 20.5 x 29.1 cm
 Gift of Professor and
 Mrs. Theodore Herman,
 Picker Art Gallery, Colgate
 University

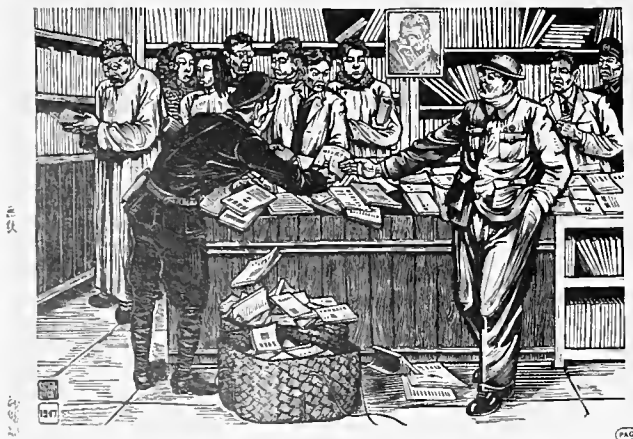
123. Zhao Yannian (b. 1924)
Spreading Civilization
 1916–1947
 Woodcut; 13.8 x 19 cm
 Gift of Professor and
 Mrs. Theodore Herman,
 Picker Art Gallery, Colgate
 University



120



121



122



123

124. Cai Dizhi (b. 1918)

Fleeing Guilin by the North Station

1944

Woodcut; 14.6 x 21 cm

Gift of Professor and Mrs. Theodore
Herman, Picker Art Gallery, Colgate
University



125. Li Hua (1907–1994)

Arise, Suffering Slaves

1947

Woodcut; 20 x 27.5 cm

Gift of Professor and Mrs. Theodore
Herman, Picker Art Gallery, Colgate
University



126. Gu Yuan (1919-1996)

Human Bridge

1948

Woodcut; 22.2 x 39.3 cm

Jiangsu Provincial Art Gallery, Nanjing



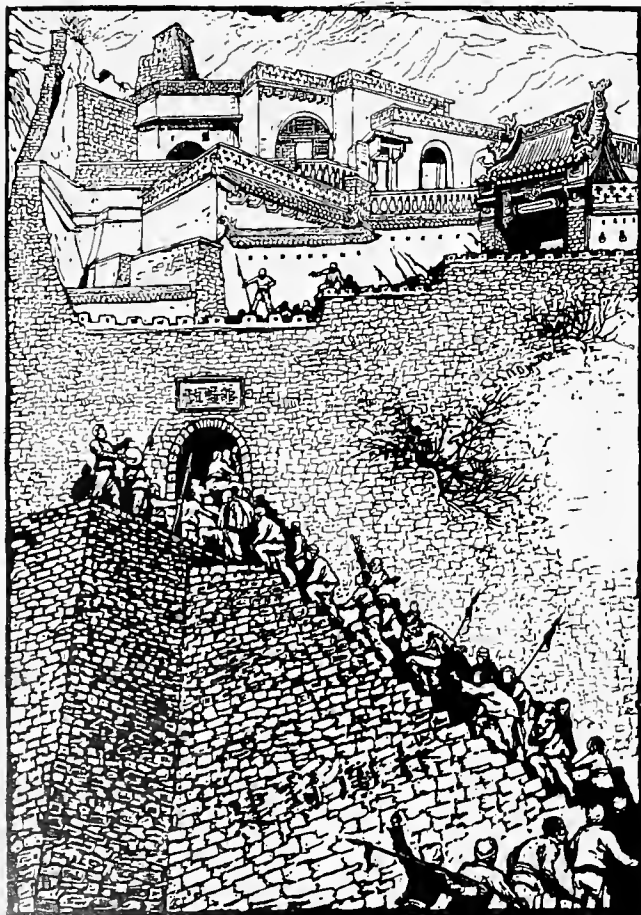
127. Shi Lu (1919-1982)

Down with Feudalism

1949

Woodcut; 31.2 x 22 cm

China International Exhibition Agency,
Beijing



The Modern Woodcut Movement

Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen, The Ohio State University

The woodcut movement, which by the late 1940s had become the de facto “official art” of the Communist party, may be the most thoroughly published of any segment of twentieth-century Chinese art. The hagiographic nature of much of the literature is due, in part, to the very real difficulties its idealistic young artists faced. This canonization, however, obscures its avant-garde origins, and tends to oversimplify the histories of its artists, of the art form, and of China itself in this extraordinarily complicated period.

Rather than viewing the modern woodcut movement as the first chapter in the development of Communist art, we assert that its early history is best divided into two phases that parallel developments in other imported Western mediums.¹ An important chronological divide occurred at the Japanese invasion, which was a critical episode in the development of all Chinese artists. Although a certain proportion of the prints produced before 1937 disclose leftist political inclinations, multifaceted modernism was by far their prevailing and most pervasive characteristic. Prints produced after the Japanese invasion, although still somewhat varied in style, tend toward a greater unity of purpose and a more urgently ideological tone, and are often carved in styles that are more realistic or easily readable.

Thus, while it is impossible to entirely separate the subject matter or even life stories of the artists from domestic political events, the work should also be viewed in the context of international art. Although the woodcut was invented in China, and was almost a thousand years old by the time the modern woodcut movement was born, most of its young practitioners in China considered it Western and modern. Li Hua, writing sixty years later, still maintained that the “creative” woodcut was not born in China until the twentieth century.²

One might take issue with this formulation on a number of counts, but on one essential underlying point it is correct. The artists of the modern woodcut movement in China initiated significant changes in the practice of making prints. Artists of the 1930s did away with the division of labor that had characterized Chinese printing since at least Ming

times. Whereas Ren Xiong in 1854 had turned over his paintings for *Drinking Cards with Illustrations of the Forty-eight Immortals* to a trusted and highly skilled friend for carving on pear-wood blocks, the twentieth-century print makers learned to carve and print their own blocks. Although the often technically crude results of these early printing efforts are arguably less “creative” than Ren Xiong’s sophisticated collaboration with his printer, they do project feelings of immediacy that are certainly appropriate to the styles and meanings of the works. Additionally, artists of the modern woodcut generally printed with European oil-based printing inks rather than with traditional water-based inks, further differentiating their work from that of earlier times.

The modern woodcut was thus a form of art that, from its inception, fully synthesized the cosmopolitan aspirations of its practitioners with the particularities of their Chinese situation. In the development of this new movement the most consequential figure, as mentor and as patron, was writer, art collector, and amateur designer Lu Xun (1881–1936). Trained in applied sciences at the School of Mining and Railways in Nanjing beginning in 1898, and in medical and literary studies in Tokyo from 1902 to 1909, he became convinced that not only modern science and medicine but also modern literature and art, which he believed could free the spirit, were crucial to the modernization of China.

Appointed in 1912 by the Chinese Republic’s first Minister of Education, Cai Yuanpei, to head a section of the ministry’s Social Education Office responsible for art, culture, and science, he took as his mandate the development of museums, libraries, galleries, exhibitions, literature, and drama, and the preservation of ancient sites and monuments. A series of public lectures he gave in 1912, which proposed a program to disseminate art throughout the population by means of public cultural institutions such as museums, concert halls, theaters, and historical monuments, was particularly far-sighted.³

As a collector of art, Lu Xun amassed objects that ranged from illustrated books to antique rubbings, from Ming

paintings to European woodcuts. This broad view of material culture may have been typical of scholar-collectors of the premodern era, but Lu Xun's practical training and, most importantly, his avid reading of European and Japanese literature expanded his horizons to include objects from Russia, Germany, and Japan alongside his Chinese specimens. Among his early enthusiasms as a collector and patron was the art of illustration, which included traditional Chinese illustrated books and European books. This completely global view of the arts was fully synthesized in his own fiction, which is extremely individualistic, very Chinese, and yet fully international.

Lu Xun remained in Beijing until 1926, when a dispute with the Ministry of Education led him to take teaching posts first in Xiamen, Fujian Province, and then in Guangzhou. By the fall of 1927 the Nationalist government's brutal suppression of Communist sympathizers, which led to the death of one of Lu Xun's students, impelled him to move to Shanghai. During the last decade of his life he strove to encourage visual artists who might realize in the visual arts the same cosmopolitan originality that he advocated in literature. Active throughout his career in publishing and editing, Lu Xun conveyed to his followers the importance of disseminating art and knowledge through printing.

In the 1880s, while Chinese artists were experimenting with lithography to reproduce their monochromatic line-drawn journalistic images, many Japanese newspapers continued to commission woodblock-printed pictures, perhaps because their color was superior to that of contemporary lithographs. Slightly later, between about 1895 and 1915, the numerous Japanese oil painters who studied in Europe were returning, bringing not only mastery of modern styles of oil painting but also full awareness of the prestige of Japanese woodcuts among modern Western painters. Woodcut art, which in the late nineteenth century was threatened by popular publishing in Western mediums, experienced an artistic revival. This revival, spurred in part by graduates of the Western painting department of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, such as Yamamoto

Kanae (1882–1946), began about 1915 and steadily grew throughout the twenties and thirties.¹

The artist Li Shutong (1880–1942), one of the first Chinese to study art in Meiji Japan, returned home enthusiastic about the making of woodblock prints, and by 1912 he and his students were carving their own blocks for woodblock prints. He went on to exhibit prints by European artists in Shanghai in 1918.² Li's influence on the development of Chinese graphic design, particularly cover design and illustration, is patent in the careers of his students and their students, including Feng Zikai (1898–1975) and Qian Juntao (b. 1906), but woodcuts did not, apparently, take hold as quickly in the Chinese artistic community.³

Among the young artists inspired by Lu Xun and Li Shutong in the late twenties and early thirties, it was generally oil painters who were attracted to the woodcut medium, and they derived fervor from their belief that the woodcut movement was wholly modern and Western in origin. Whereas Lu Xun and Li Shutong, classically educated in China and further trained in Japan, would have been thoroughly aware of the connections between modern woodcuts and the woodblock print tradition, both Chinese and Japanese. Both men might well have discovered the Japanese woodblock tradition and its connection with the modernist woodcuts of contemporary Japanese artists while studying in Japan; Lu Xun would certainly have encountered modern Japanese woodcuts via his friendship with the Japanese bookstore owner Uchiyama Kanzō, whom he met in Shanghai. Among younger Chinese artists, it was only later that traditional Chinese woodblock prints, unmatched in techniques and materials, became a source of justifiable pride.

During the twenties and thirties Lu Xun took as one of his missions the promotion of European art, particularly art that seemed to deal with social and political problems similar to those faced by China. He organized a number of events at which young artists had the opportunity to see his collection of European woodcuts and to hear his views on the potential efficacy of this art form in improving China's art and society. And, although

increasingly sympathetic to the Communist party, his taste in art was broad. He and five friends, calling themselves the Morning Flower Society, published between 1928 and 1930 five volumes of foreign woodcuts, which ranged in style from Aubrey Beardsley to Russian Constructivism. In 1930, with the help of his friend Uchiyama Kanzō, he held several exhibitions of his woodcut collection in Shanghai. Equally influential were his published translations, including Russian Marxist art theory by Anatoly Lunacharsky (cat. 80), Georgy Plekhanov, and others.

The birth of the modern Chinese woodcut movement is often dated by its participants to the week of 17–22 August 1931, when Lu Xun organized a group of young artists to study print making with the younger brother of his friend Uchiyama Kanzō. The same intellectual ferment of the late 1920s that produced artistic radicals such as the members of the Storm Society brought the woodcut movement into being. Unlike the oil painters, however, whose works tended to be radical in form rather than theme, some at least of the young converts to the woodcut movement gave pictorial expression to the political activism and social criticism expressed by Lu Xun (and most other May Fourth writers).

The newly established National Hangzhou Arts Academy, with the encouragement of the school's French-trained director, Lin Fengmian, had spawned a student club that called itself the Eighteen Arts Society, after the year of its founding (1929, or the eighteenth year of the Republic). Soon the Eighteen had a branch in Shanghai. Some of its members became involved with the Communist Youth League when it was formed the following year, and others joined the League of Left-Wing Artists in 1931. To recruit students for the woodcut class that he organized and sponsored and for which he translated and lectured, Lu Xun contacted the Eighteen Arts Society, which enrolled six of its own members, two students from Shanghai Arts College (*Shanghai yizhuan*), two from Shanghai Art Academy (*Shanghai meizhuan*), and three from the White Goose Western Painting Club, for a total of thirteen students. Among the artists represented

here, Jiang Feng (see cat. 92) and Chen Tiegeng (see cat. 91), representing the White Goose Western Painting Club and the Shanghai Arts College, respectively, attended the class. The course included practical training in carving and printing by Uchiyama, as well as some introductory art history of prints, from *ukiyo-e* to German Expressionism, taught by Lu Xun and illustrated by original examples.

Lu Xun served as a mentor to many more young print makers. After the headquarters of the Eighteen Society in Shanghai was destroyed by the Japanese bombing in 1932, this organization was succeeded by a rapid succession of art clubs, which sought to keep one step ahead of the increasingly anti-leftist measures of the Nationalist authorities. Most of these groups were in touch with Lu Xun, and some even obtained his financial backing. Many of the early woodcuts reproduced here were gifts from the young artists, either individually or as a group, to their mentor.

Although the prints of the twenties and thirties were not uniformly political in content (as standard post-1949 histories would lead us to believe), many of them *were* political, usually either antigovernment or anti-Japanese, or—less often in this period—overtly socialist. Some of the earliest were direct responses to perceived outrages committed by the Nationalist government. During the year preceding Hu Yichuan's making of *To the Front!* in 1932 (cat. 99), Japan had invaded Manchuria and bombed a section of Shanghai. The print is a clear attack on the Nationalist government's failure to resist Japanese aggression and a call for a popular resistance movement.

Hu Yichuan was twenty-two years old when he produced *To the Front!*. From a Fujianese family but raised in Indonesia, he returned to Xiamen for middle school in 1925. He matriculated at the Hangzhou West Lake National Arts Academy in 1929, where he studied with a French oil-painting instructor. He became involved in a number of student activities, including organizing the influential Eighteen Arts Society and the Communist Youth League. In 1930 he joined the League of Left-Wing Artists and by 1931 was closely involved with Lu Xun and the woodcut

movement. He was expelled from the Academy for his political work in 1932, whereupon he moved to Shanghai to teach print making and to engage in labor activism.

To the Front! was exhibited in mid-June of 1932 at an exhibition held by the Eighteen Arts Society's successor, the Spring Earth Painting Research Center, at the Shanghai YMCA. That leftist group, then only a month old, proclaimed in its manifesto: "Modern art must follow a new road, must serve a new society, must become a powerful tool for educating the masses, informing the masses, and organizing the masses. The new art must accept this mission as it moves forward."⁷ The exhibition included roughly a hundred oils, cartoons, gouaches, and woodcuts, as well as a collection of fifty or sixty German prints assembled by Lu Xun and a German friend. At the exhibition Lu Xun purchased ten prints, of which this may have been one.

A number of members of the Spring Earth Society, including Jiang Feng and the poet Ai Qing, were arrested in July of 1932, and the club's papers and prints were seized as evidence of subversion. Members remaining free established a new club in September, the Wild Wind Painting Association, at which Lu Xun lectured in October and December. Among those in attendance were Hu Yichuan, Ma Da, Xia Peng, and Chen Tiegeng (see cats. 91, 95). As one club succumbed to political or financial pressures, it was succeeded by another. Hu Yichuan was arrested in 1933, and his friends Ma Da, Xia Peng, Chen Tiegeng, and Wo Zha (1905-1974) (see cat. 93) regrouped as the Empty Wave Painting Club. Within a month the group's leaders, including his lover, Xia Peng, were arrested. She died in jail the following year. Such events, which were tragically common among the young activist artists, can only have turned their youthful enthusiasm into grim resolve. The movement flowered despite, or perhaps because of, the Nationalist government's attempts to stamp out political dissent.

A group of print makers, mostly students and faculty of Shanghai Arts College and their friends, including Chen Tiegeng (1908-1970), Chen Yanqiao (1911-1970), and He Baitao (1913-1939) (see

cat. 106), organized themselves into the Wild Grain Woodcut Society in 1933. In the same year they published two issues of the hand-printed *Muban hua* ("Woodblock Prints"), which were distributed by Shenzhou Guoguang Press; then it was suppressed by the authorities.⁸ Chen Tiegeng's *Glimpse of the Esperanto Exhibition*, signed with his pseudonym Kebo, is one of ten prints published in the first issue (cat. 91). The exhibited copy of the magazine bears on its cover a dedication to Lu Xun in pencil, dated to 15 June 1933, by the Wild Grain Society.

Chen Tiegeng, whose original name was Chen Yaotang, like a remarkable number of the progressive print makers, was a native of Xingning, Guangdong Province. The number of politically progressive print makers from Guangdong is striking; Li Hua, himself a Guangdong native, attributes that concentration to the progressive Sun Yat-sen government established in Guangzhou in 1924, and to the freedoms offered by the treaty ports of Hong Kong and Macao.⁹ Chen entered the National Hangzhou Arts Academy soon after its founding in 1928. He joined the Eighteen Arts Society, and worked with Jiang Feng to establish its branch in Shanghai. In 1932 he took part in the summer woodcut class that Lu Xun had organized in 1931. A co-founder, with Chen Yanqiao and other students at the Shanghai New China Art School, of the Wild Grain Woodcut Society in 1933, he returned to his home town of Xingning to teach middle school in 1935.¹⁰

Chen Yanqiao, who also published prints under the name Li Wucheng, was a native of Dongwan in Guangdong Province. Sources differ on whether he entered the National Hangzhou Arts Academy or the Guangzhou Art School's Western painting department in 1928, but in 1931 he transferred to the Western painting department of Shanghai's New China Art School. Lu Xun quickly became his mentor in the woodcut movement. A passionate activist, Chen co-founded both the Wild Grain Woodcut Society and the Empty Wave Painting Society in 1933, and was arrested soon thereafter. By the fall of 1936 he had reappeared as a member of the Modern Woodcut Society in Guangzhou, and he helped Li Hua organize the second

National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition of 1936. Shortly before Lu Xun died, they were photographed together in Shanghai.¹¹

Also in 1933, a group that called itself the Nameless Woodcut Society (*Weiming muke she*) appeared on the scene, founded by Lu Xun's student Liu Xian (1915-1990) and the latter's friend Huang Xinbo (1915-1980). In 1934 the group produced an anthology entitled *Nameless Woodcut Selection*, whose frontispiece is reproduced here (cat. 88). The prints were mainly contributed by Liu Xian, Huang Xinbo, and Chen Yanqiao, and the uncredited frontispiece image closely resembles the work of Huang Xinbo. According to the preface, dated to October 1934, the group had four founding members, was about a year old, and had published two previous anthologies, in which they called themselves first "00" and then "Anonymous Society." In July of 1934 they adopted the appellation Nameless Woodcut Society. The preface notes with some distress the report that the Nationalist government's Labor Department had recently seized the prints of the MK Society and arrested many of its members. "This makes us suspicious and fearful. 'This woodcutting cannot be studied? Why?' The Wooden Bell Woodcut Society in Hangzhou, and the Wildfire Woodcut Research Society in Beiping were both forced to close even earlier. The reasons for this need not be gone over... We think, ourselves, that when we have an opportunity to carve and to print, we will continue construction and struggle!" The album includes rural landscapes, unhappy factory workers, strikes, and the somewhat chilling depiction of urban industry in catalogue 88. The group also published solo collections by Liu Xian and Huang Xinbo and a number of print anthologies, some of which were distributed in Shanghai by the Uchiyama Bookstore.

Liu Xian was a native of Lanfeng (now Lankao) county, Henan Province. He began making woodcuts on his own in Beijing, and in 1933 enrolled in the Shanghai Arts College, where he met Huang Xinbo. Between 1934 and 1937, he studied at the Imperial Arts College in Tokyo. While in Japan he published widely in China, both solo albums and in woodcut periodicals such as *Modern*

Woodcut (see cat. 101). Of all his prints, the most striking may be the undated *Prisoner* (cat. 107).¹²

Huang Xinbo, who also published under the name Yigong, was a native of Taishan, Guangdong Province. In 1933 he moved from Guangdong to Shanghai, where he studied briefly at the New Asia Art Institute and associated with woodcut artists such as Liu Xian. The mid-1930s found him briefly in Japan, whence he returned to help organize the Second National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition of 1936. Several extremely interesting Surrealist oil paintings, done in the early thirties, survive in poor condition in Guangzhou.

Persecuted in Shanghai by the Guomindang, many of the print makers returned to their home towns in Guangdong, which became an important center for woodcut activity. A group of art societies, closely related in membership and purpose to those that had been forced to disband in Shanghai, sprang up in various parts of Guangzhou during the mid to late 1930s, organized by returnees from Shanghai and Hangzhou. Even as calls for patriotic art were raised, and met, by many of the artists, more personal work continued to fill the pages of the woodcut journals.

After graduating in 1935, Zhang Wang (1915-1992) also left Shanghai to return to Shantou, Guangdong, and became active in the various woodcut societies in the region. Zhang Wang, who also published under the name Zhang Zhiping, had entered the Shanghai Arts College's Western painting department in 1931. The following year he joined the League of Left-Wing Artists and organized the MK Woodcut Society. His print *Head Wound*, of 1934 (cat. 103), depicting a boy injured in a demonstration, was selected by Lu Xun for inclusion in his contemporary woodcut anthology *Muke jicheng* ("Woodcut Progress").¹³ His equally striking anti-Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) print, *China's Dictator* (cat. 108), was sent by Lu Xun in 1933 for exhibition in France and Russia under the name Zhang Ping. Zhang Wang edited *Huilan muke* ("Rising Tide Woodcuts"), which in 1935 published prints made by faculty and students of Shantou middle schools. In his preface, written in May of 1935, Zhang Wang

traced the artistic lineage of the modern woodcut movement through the small societies we have described, beginning with the Eighteen Arts Society, through the Wooden Bell Society, the Wild Grain Woodcut Society, and the MK Woodcut Society.

Chen Tiegeng, returning from Shanghai in 1935, continued to publish in Guangdong, along with other woodcut artists including Zhang Hui (cat. 105) and Luo Qingzhen, and continued to correspond with Lu Xun. One of Chen's best-known prints was reproduced in *Huilan muke*. It is exhibited here under the title *Waiting* (cat. 95), but it exists in several different states, as well as in versions bearing different titles. The Paris exhibition list prepared by Lu Xun in late 1933 includes a print called *Waiting for Papa*. Various other publications list it as *Mother and Son*. The image depicts a mother and son desperately awaiting the return of the boy's father. Has the absent father gone to seek work? Has he been arrested or killed? Less striking compositionally than Zhang Wang's work, it nonetheless is moving in its ambiguity.

The most influential group in Guangzhou, the Society for Research on Modern Creative Prints, was established in 1934 and continued to be extremely active until the Japanese occupied the city in 1938. One of its key organizers was Li Hua (1907-1994). Like many of the Chinese modernists, Li Hua was born in Guangzhou to a merchant family. He studied at the Guangzhou Municipal Art College, and recalls having been infatuated in his youth with art of the School of Paris. By the late 1920s, with the publication of Lu Xun's woodcut collection, many young artists in Guangzhou had begun studying prints. The young Li Hua switched from oil painting to print making in the early 1930s and went briefly to Shanghai, the fountainhead of the modern woodcut movement and of modern art generally. Returning to teach at his alma mater, Guangzhou Municipal Art College in 1934, he took advantage of the political freedoms offered by nearby Macao and Hong Kong to organize a society to promote print making. Calling itself the Society for Research on Modern Creative Woodcuts, it is usually referred to as the Modern Woodcut Society (*Xiandai banhua*

hui), and it published eighteen issues of *Modern Woodcut* between 1934 and 1936 (see cats. 87, 89, 90, 98, 100-102).

In July of 1934 the group began corresponding with Lu Xun, to whom they sent a copy of each issue. The issues of *Modern Woodcut* reproduced here were given by Li Hua to Lu Xun. The first issue, run off on machine presses and totaling five hundred copies, appeared in December 1934. Its editorial introduction proclaimed the artists' fealty to Western prototypes by beginning: "Printmaking has a very short history in China...." It concludes by stating the editor's belief that prints, with their strong contrasts of light and dark, are the "art form best suited to expressing profound emotions and representing images of human life and society."

Acknowledging receipt of his copy, Lu Xun commented that the glossy paper and oily ink diminished the effect of the artwork, and he counseled that woodcuts should be printed by hand. Li Hua took this advice to heart. Henceforth the magazine was composed of original prints pasted onto its pages, and was usually issued in a run of fifty copies. Li Hua's *Street Sweepers*, of 1935 (cat. 90), is the cover of the third issue. Issue four drew a highly positive response from Lu Xun: it was printed and bound beautifully, it should be sent to artists and critics in Japan and Russia, and his friend Uchiyama had expressed interest in selling issues two through four, if copies were still available.¹⁴ That issue was filled with charming images taken from folk culture, but issue 5, which claims to carry on the editorial intent to represent everyday life in Guangzhou, is far from pleasant. In his preface Li Hua wrote that the medium is well suited to representing common life, because it is undecorative and even naïve. The images in issue five, in a variety of styles, all represent the underside of society: a lonely old man with his caged bird, female construction workers doing back-breaking labor, the dog market, blind singers alone at night, pawnshops, gambling, opium addiction, ricksha pullers, prostitution, cricket fights, and so forth. Liu Xian's ironically titled *A Lady*, in this issue (cat. 101), is clearly a lady of the evening.

In the preface to the sixth issue Li Hua's student Lai Shaoqi (b. 1915), quot-

ing a Japanese writer and Guo Moruo, wrote of woodcuts that they had appeared in a time of social unrest and should serve society's needs. He quoted the Japanese author as saying that one has no right to talk about literature or art, and cannot possibly understand literature and art, unless one immerses oneself in the realities of society. The quotation from Guo Moruo admonishes the artist not to be the grandson of nature nor the son of nature but rather the father of nature. This Lai interpreted to mean that the artist should *express* nature but should never imitate or represent nature. Continuing in his own voice, Lai asserted that the woodblock print is the good friend of the common people, an aid to Chinese culture and preventive of the corruption of the common people's consciousness. Thus, we should not only understand how to appreciate and create, but also should understand the woodcut itself, that is to say, the needs of society.

Although the phrasing of such passages of introductory text is strongly colored by socialist rhetoric, the artistic work itself seems modeled on a broader range of sources. Tang Yingwei's (b. 1915) *Blue Memory*, in the sixth issue, offers a very personal meditation on human life, presented in a European modernist format; the distress it represents, individual and possibly alcohol-induced, is only vaguely attributable to societal malaise. The whole work is intentionally naïve in execution, including the avant-garde poem carved with deliberate clumsiness beneath the figural image (cat. 102). It reads:

*That black bird, from a distant place,
Brings dreams and memories
That are the blue taste of wine, aah.
Those people at the mouth of the volcano,
They do the skeleton dance,
Those people at the mouth of the volcano,
They sing the soul's dirge.
Those pathetic people, ohhhh.
What they remember,
What we remember,
Everything,
Is blue memory.*

A similar crisis of the spirit as rendered by Li Hua, one of his several experiments in multiblock printing (see cat. 100),

appears amid Picassoesque still lifes in the subsequent issue. Li Hua's extraordinary call to arms, *China, Roar!* (cat. 98), appearing in issue fourteen, signifies the increasingly political distress of the artists. Their aggravated patriotism is increasingly evident in issue fifteen, despite its ostensible theme of New Year's cards and Tang Yingwei's beautiful floral image on the cover (cat. 87). Among the "cards" within is one bearing gruesome images printed on red paper and entitled *The Terrors of 1936*...., presumably an ironic celebration (premature, as it turned out) of better things to come in 1937. Lai Shaoqi's Cubist jailbreak is typical of his modernistic aspirations in style, and its subject is characteristic of the ever more political nature of the group's subject matter (cat. 89).¹⁵ Long-haired civilians attempt to break out of a barbed-wire enclosure, watched by soldiers wearing the steel helmets usually associated with Japanese troops. The print would seem, then, an exhortation to eject the invading Japanese oppressors.

Li Hua was fired from his teaching post at Guangzhou Municipal Art College, in the fall of 1935 because of his involvement in the left-wing woodcut movement. During the mid-thirties, in addition to his responsibilities in publishing *Modern Woodcut*, he helped organize the First National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition and produced several solo albums, including one consisting of polychromatic woodcuts in the style of Picasso and another, entitled *The Suburbs in Spring*, of lyrical landscapes (see cat. 94). The prints of Li and his colleagues from this period display a variety of styles, ranging from Cubism to Expressionism to Realism. Like Pang Xunqin and his fellow artists in the Storm Society in Shanghai, Li and other Cantonese artists were attacked by both the left and the right. To the dogmatic Communists of Shanghai, their varied and often rather personal work was petit bourgeois; to the Nationalist authorities, much of their imagery was alarmingly left-wing.

The First National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition was held in Beijing during the first six months of 1935, then toured several other cities, including Shanghai. It presented 280 contemporary woodcuts, many of them emphatically

political in subject matter. Although the editor of the catalogue was arrested before it was published, the exhibition proceeded with relatively little interference, and stimulated new waves of woodcut production. As if in response, a group of Shanghai artists, including Jiang Feng and Wo Zha, organized the Steel Horse Print Society and published three issues of a handprinted periodical which they called *Steel Horse Woodcuts*. Wo Zha's depiction of the tragic Yangzi River floods of 1931 appeared in the first issue (cat. 93), while Jiang Feng, recently released from prison, presumably rendered a subject from his own experience, *The Trial*, for the second issue (cat. 92).

Li Hua and several other members of the Modern Woodcut Society in Guangzhou were also instrumental in organizing the second National Traveling Print Exhibition, to be held the following year. And in April of 1936 the Modern Woodcut Society started a new magazine, *Muke jie* ("Woodcut World"), edited by Tang Yingwei. In contrast to its predecessor, *Modern Woodcut*, the new periodical was mechanically printed, and its format of essays, short features, news items from China and abroad, and reproductions of new woodcuts was designed to reach a wider audience. Subjects of particular concern in its pages were the Second National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition, which the Society was then in process of organizing, and the role of woodcuts in China's resistance to Japan.

Chen Yanqiao's grim *Security Tower*, 1936 (cat. 96), was published in the first issue of *Woodcut World*, which appeared on 15 April 1936. The current exhibition's copy of this issue was given to Lu Xun by Tang Yingwei, according to the handwritten inscription dedicating it to Lu. Tang Yingwei's *Trail Blazing* (cat. 86) appeared on the cover of the third issue, which featured articles about the artistic experience as recounted by various print makers in the group, along with an essay on art for national defense and another on questions of woodcuts and realism. The copy of this issue in the current exhibition is also inscribed in ink by Tang Yingwei to Lu Xun. The fourth (and final) issue, with Tang Yingwei's dramatic cover image *Forward!* (cat. 85), included a checklist of the Second National

Traveling Exhibition, which opened at Guangzhou Central Library on 5 July 1936, along with a map of its itinerary in each of the twelve planned venues. Tang's style in *Forward!* is quite different from the lyricism of his *Chrysanthemum* (cat. 87) of about the same time. Herc, heroically rendered militia, male and female, advance under a banner proclaiming "Liberation." One of the last known photographs of Lu Xun was taken on 8 October 1936, at the Shanghai YMCA showing of the Second National Traveling Exhibition, eleven days before he died of tuberculosis.

Several works in the present exhibition were part of that 1936 national woodcut exhibition, including Tang Yingwei's *The Homeless* (cat. 110), Li Hua's *China, Roar!* (cat. 98), and Wo Zha's *Flooding* (cat. 93). Zhang Hui and Lai Shaoqi also figure in both exhibitions, though represented in each by different works (cats. 105, 89). Tang Yingwei's *Devils* (cat. 104) did not appear in the 1936 exhibition.

The Modern Woodcut Society disbanded in 1938 with the outbreak of the war, and the third national exhibition took place under very difficult circumstances. Under the Japanese occupation the print makers scattered, some to Hong Kong or abroad, others to Chongqing to assist the war effort at the capital-in-exile, and yet others to the Communist stronghold in Yan'an. The days of modernist experimentation were over, as the woodcut movement dedicated itself with newfound focus to communicating national needs and political goals.

THE WAR YEARS

As we have seen, the Japanese military made continuous incursions into China throughout the 1930s. Several infamous milestones mark the steady path to war. On 18 September 1931 Japanese troops in Manchuria provoked skirmishes with the Chinese army, as pretext for the invasion of Manchuria by Japanese troops based in Korea. By the end of the year Japan controlled the entire region. For reasons that primarily had to do with domestic politics, Jiang Jieshi ordered the Chinese army to retreat south of the Great Wall, thus effectively ceding Manchuria to Japanese control. Then, on 29 January 1932, the Japanese navy bombed Zhabei,

killing many civilians in this poor residential district of Shanghai and destroying, among other enterprises, the Commercial Press.

The government's failure to respond to these insults, while at the same time using its police and military to suppress domestic dissent, was extremely unpopular; and on 12 December 1936 Jiang Jieshi was kidnapped by an alliance of generals and warlords who released him on his promise to stop persecuting his political opposition and to reorganize his government to resist Japan. Thus, when Japan attacked Chinese troops outside Beijing on 7 July 1937—the Marco Polo Bridge Incident—war followed. After occupying Beijing and Tianjin, the Japanese moved steadily south, and the army (as well as its general) assigned by Jiang Jieshi to defend Nanjing deserted. After taking control of Nanjing on 12–13 December 1937, Japanese troops raped, massacred, and looted for seven weeks—a rampage that their commanders abetted or condoned as fitting punishment for the city's resistance. The "Rape of Nanjing" shocked the world; as historian Jonathan Spence has written, this "period of terror and destruction ... must rank among the worst in the history of modern warfare."¹⁶

Artists and intellectuals rallied to the national crisis, briefly hopeful that the civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists could be put aside for the sake of the nation's survival. Woodcuts, recently viewed in Shanghai as instruments of social change, now became weapons of national salvation. When a new capital was briefly established at Wuhan in central China, a department of the government was organized under Guo Moruo to coordinate the activities of writers and artists in the anti-Japanese effort. Throughout 1938 activists, including Ni Yide, Li Hua, Lai Shaoqi, Huang Xinbo, and Luo Gongliu, flocked to Wuhan from Guangzhou, Shanghai, Hangzhou, and elsewhere. But Wuhan also fell by the end of 1938, by which time the Japanese controlled most of China's eastern seaboard and its major outlets to the sea. Only the international concessions of Shanghai remained free, and those only until the bombing of Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941.

The Nationalists had agreed to work

with the Communists in a United Front against the Japanese, but the two groups still maintained separate bases, the Nationalists in China's southwest, with their wartime capital at Chongqing, Sichuan Province. The neighboring province of Yunnan served as their transportation corridor to the European colonies in southeast Asia. The Communists had established their capital in Yan'an, in the north-central province of Shaanxi, and controlled a substantial amount of territory in this impoverished region. After the collapse of Wuhan, China's artists, like all Chinese, were left with very unsatisfactory options. They could remain in their Japanese-occupied homes, as some did, or they could relocate to the Nationalist territories, or they could join the Communists in Shaanxi. As Li Hua has pointed out, the lack of communication between the Nationalist and Communist base areas, as well as the different life experiences, led woodcut artists to develop somewhat different styles and themes.

Some of the artists who headed immediately for Yan'an, like Jiang Feng, were already committed Communists, but many were liberal or leftist intellectuals impelled to join the Communists at Yan'an by Jiang Jieshi's persecution of political dissenters, and did not become party members until after their arrival. Yan Han (b. 1916), for example, who with classmates from the Hangzhou Arts Academy had fled the Japanese occupation for Nationalist-controlled inland China, soon left school for Yan'an, but did not join the Communist party until three months after his arrival. Among artists who moved to Yan'an after Wuhan fell were Jiang Feng, Hu Yichuan, Chen Tiegeng, Wo Zha, and Luo Gongliu. Younger artists, such as Gu Yuan (1919–1996) and Yan Han, soon followed. This pattern of disillusionment with the Nationalists repeated itself many times: after the fall of Wuhan to the Japanese such artists as Chen Yanqiao and Zhang Wang first joined the anti-Japanese resistance at Chongqing, then (in 1939) moved to the Communists at Yan'an. The Yan'an area was the base of activity for the Communist Eighth Route Army, and activities there aimed to support the army's efforts.

In 1938 the Communist New Fourth Army was organized in the south, to operate mainly in Jiangxi, Jiangsu, and Anhui provinces. Liu Xian, who had gone to Japan in 1934, returned home following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in 1937. In 1938, the year he carved the exquisite woodcut *Consolidate Our Unity* (cat. 111), he joined the New Fourth Army in his native Henan Province.

A now-legendary school called the Lu Xun Academy of Arts was established at the Communist base of Yan'an to train young artists in propaganda techniques. It was headed first by Hu Yichuan, then by Jiang Feng, veterans of the Shanghai woodcut movement, who dominated propaganda efforts. Other faculty members were Wo Zha, who arrived in 1937, Chen Yanqiao and Zhang Wang, who came from Chongqing in 1939, and Liu Xian, who moved there from the south in 1939. Liu Xian first taught print making at the Lu Xun Academy, and later held various administrative positions, including head of the Art Committee of the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Area Culture Association. In 1942 he had a solo show in Yan'an. After the war he went to work for *New China Daily* in Chongqing.

Among the most notable students of the academy was Yan Han, who had already completed three years of art school in Hangzhou. He studied at the Lu Xun Academy for three months in 1938, then was assigned to the academy's woodcut team at the headquarters of the Eighth Route Army in the Taihang Mountains. He worked in the field with Hu Yichuan and Luo Gongliu, often behind enemy lines, producing woodcut posters to encourage the local peasants to resist the Japanese and help the Communist army. Another noteworthy student was Gu Yuan, who arrived in 1939 and became one of the instructors at the academy after completing the woodcut class.

A number of veteran Shanghai artists attended Mao Zedong's Yan'an Talks on Art and Literature in 1942, following which they were urged to discard their urban attitudes, the better to satisfy the tastes of their peasant audience.¹⁷ In a striking stylistic shift, the woodcut artists largely abandoned shading and three-dimensional settings in their

prints, striving for naïve effects that more closely resembled folk prints. Yan Han's 1944 print, *New Year Door Guardian, People's Fighter* (cat. 113), was originally one of a pair of woodcut posters intended to replace the traditional door guardian with a patriotic image. Its stylized sword, spear, horse, and decorated textiles do indeed recall the compositional and aesthetic conventions of folk New Year's prints of the region, but also present some significant iconographic modifications.

In narrative woodcuts of the same time and region figures tend to be arranged in frieze-like compositions (see cat. 116). Particularly striking is the new practice of cutting away most of the woodblock, leaving the images in outline. This convention, based on antique sources, was fundamental to the conservative aesthetics of folk prints in the region.

Following Japan's surrender to the Allies in 1945, the never wholly discontinued conflict between the Communists and the Nationalists intensified. Most artists who had been active in Yan'an remained in the Communist-controlled territories until the Communist victory in 1949. Gu Yuan's *Human Bridge* of 1948 (cat. 126) was produced after he had trekked with his comrades on foot to the Communist-controlled part of Manchuria the previous year. Like many prints produced in what were called the liberated zones, it was celebratory in nature, commemorating the heroism of a glorious military victory.

A similarly positive print was made the following year by the Sichuan native Shi Lu (1919-1982), who had left home for the Communist base area in 1939. In the mid-forties he, like Liu Xian, went to work for the Culture Association of the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region. Shi's striking print of 1949, *Down With Feudalism* (cat. 127), celebrates the Communist victory in the mountainous northwest.

Work produced in the Nationalist areas was slightly different in style and subject matter from the work of the Yan'an artists. Jiang Jieshi had agreed to cease persecuting political dissenters as part of the United Front, but his actions continued to dismay many intellectuals. As we have seen, several print makers who had originally settled in Nationalist

Chongqing, including Zhang Wang and Chen Yanqiao, joined the Communists in 1939.

Themes common in prewar Shanghai, such as the persecution of patriots by the Nationalist government, remained lamentably relevant during the war years. Huang Xinbo, who had studied briefly in Japan and had been active in Guangzhou immediately before the war, joined Li Hua and Lai Shaoqi in Wuhan in 1938 to found the All-China Woodcutters' Resist Japan Association. Following the Japanese capture of Wuhan, the group re-established itself at Guilin, Guangxi Province. After New Fourth Army troops were massacred by their supposed allies, the Nationalist army, in 1941, Huang carved *He Hasn't Really Gone* (cat. 112) to commemorate the victims. He seems to have discovered the work of Rockwell Kent at about this time, for all his later prints emulate the fine hatching and black backgrounds of that American artist's prints. The style works with particular power in *He Hasn't Really Gone*, where his formal precision lends an unsettling elegance to the subject matter of an unburied corpse. After World War II ended, Huang Xinbo moved to Hong Kong, returning in 1949 to join the Communist guerrillas in Guangzhou.

The work of Shanghai cartoonist Ding Cong (b. 1916) expresses even greater disillusionment. During the war years Ding worked first in Hong Kong and then in the southwest. *Images of Today* (cat. 119) of 1944 skewers the Nationalist government's censorship and corruption. Among the barefoot soldiers, starving children, impoverished professors, and blindfolded artist move fat, corrupt officials, who are allowing needed food and fabric to deteriorate as they plot their next financial moves. Although *Images of Today* is a gouache, not a woodcut, it is like contemporary woodcuts in theme and purpose.

Following the Japanese surrender, artists in Yan'an tended to stay in the Communist-controlled areas, whereas most others returned to Shanghai. An exhibition held in Shanghai in September of 1946 showed 916 woodcuts produced during the war, and further exhibitions were held frequently over the next few years, with aims both political and artistic. The work produced after the war tended to be

even more critical of the Nationalist government than prints of previous years. Twelve of the prints in this section of the current exhibition were given in 1948 by Li Hua and Wang Renfeng to Theodore Herman, an American then working as a journalist in Shanghai, with the hope that they might be exhibited abroad.¹⁸

For the most part, the prints of the period 1945–1949 tend to be far more technically refined than the work of the early thirties. Li Hua, for example, had worked for over a decade to improve his skills at drawing and woodblock cutting. His postwar work shows no traces of his modernist experiments of the 1930s, but tends to be quite naturalistic and easily readable. Li's antigovernment print *When the Requisition Officers Leave* (cat. 117) depicts the misery inflicted by Nationalist troops as they confiscate the last food remaining in the home of a poor family. Sharp contrasts of black and white heighten the effect of harshness on one side and despair on the other. *Take Him In!* (also called *The Underground Press*; cat. 118), probably somewhat autobiographical in its imagery, features similar tonal contrasts between a dark but temporarily safe interior and a brightly lit but threatening world outside. It depicts an injured demonstrator staggering through the door of a small printing establishment: outside, visible through the open door, is a man with a billy club upraised to strike again. Yang Keyang similarly villainized the Nationalist army in a 1947 print in which soldiers and a character dressed like a gangster forcibly conscript village boys.¹⁹ Other postwar prints, such as Long Tingba's (b. 1916) *Widow and Orphan* (cat. 115), are no less heartfelt, if somewhat less refined technically.

A more generically revolutionary print, made by Li Hua as part of his 1947 "Tide of Anger" series, may have been inspired by one of Lu Xun's favorite artists, Kaethe Kollwitz. *Arise, Suffering Slaves* (cat. 125) shows the wretched of the earth, armed with a variety of weapons including farm implements, raging forward against an unseen enemy.

A younger artist, Zhao Yannian (b. 1924), infused equal power into a scene of hungry people rioting at a government rice depot (see cat. 114), making skilled use of tonal contrasts and crosshatching

to convey the irresistible mass and forward momentum of the angry crowd. Yang Keyang (b. 1914), in *The Professor Sells His Books* (cat. 120), condemns the suffering and the waste of human talent caused (he implies) by incompetent and corrupt government. *Fleeing Guilin by the North Station* (cat. 124) is a scene of desperation as far as the eye can see; again, the implied cause is government incompetence and corruption.

Censorship was an issue of great importance to the print makers. In *Spreading Civilization* (cat. 123), a much more upbeat print, Zhao Yannian created a heroic image of young men delivering newspapers or flyers, presumably propagandizing against the government—a dangerous activity. Other prints actively protest. Yang Nawei's (1912–1982) *Silence is the Best Defense* (cat. 122), made in 1947, depicts bookstore customers scowling furiously at the police who are confiscating books. A woodcut broadsheet, *Oppose Press Censorship* (cat. 121), by the unidentified Yang Kewu, shows us three cartoon figures with their mouths taped shut: they are labeled with the names of three Shanghai newspapers—*Lianhe*, *Wenhui*, and *Xinmin*—that were objects of government censorship.

The modern woodcut movement, in part by virtue of the portability of its tools and materials, had a sustained and continuous development from its birth in the late 1920s through the Communist victory. It may thus summarize some of the trends within the world of Western-style Chinese art throughout this period. Like the oil painters, the print makers aimed to achieve work that could compare qualitatively with that of print makers in the West. In the medium's initial period of development, the 1930s, woodcuts were used to express a variety of personal and political concerns, and were executed in a variety of European styles ranging from Cubism to Expressionism to Surrealism. The war bifurcated the movement, as the artists in the Communist territories developed a new, somewhat naïve style based on northern peasant art, while the artists in the Nationalist areas further refined their techniques to create complex, sophisticated images. Some of the most powerful postwar images were made in Shanghai, expressing an anguished

fury at the failings of the Nationalist government and the resulting suffering among the people. This art, with its desolate portrayals of the current social and political situation, prepared China's urban residents for the Communist victory. Protest gave this art its power. Ironically, the Communist victory ended the woodcut's period of historical importance.

NOTES

1. The hagiographic view, which assesses the woodcut movement primarily in terms of its contribution to the Communist revolution, is well exemplified by Li Hua in his *Chinese Woodcuts*, trans. Zuo Boyang (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1995). Although our essay may differ substantially in its structure and point of view from Li Hua's many publications, we do not seek to minimize his enormous contribution to the documentary study of Chinese woodcuts. Indeed, most of the prints in this exhibition owe their survival, either directly or indirectly, to Li Hua, who gave prints to scholars he believed would value and preserve them.
2. Li Hua, *Chinese Woodcuts*, p. 98.
3. Mayching Kao, *New Asia Academic Bulletin*, vol. 4 (1983), p. 386.
4. Penelope Mason, *History of Japanese Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. & Prentice Hall, 1993), pp. 376-81.
5. Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 29-30, 80.
6. For reproductions of Li Shutong's own designs of about 1919, see Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*, fig. 2.4.
7. Wang Xinqi, *Lu Xun meishu nianpu* ("Lu Xun's Art Timeline") (Guangzhou: Lingnan Art Press, 1986), p. 189.
8. Lu Di, *Zhongguo xiandai banhua* ("Modern Chinese Prints") (Beijing: People's Art Press, 1987), p. 58.
9. Li Hua, "Wo de zhuanbian" ("My Transformation") n.p., in *Li Hua huaji* ("Collected Pictures by Li Hua"), ed. Ma Ke (Tianjin: Tianjin People's Art Publishing House, 1987).
10. *Banhua jicheng: Lu Xun cang zhongguo xiandai muke quanji* ("Woodcuts' Progress: The Complete Modern Woodcut Collection of Lu Xun"), ed. Shanghai Lu Xun Memorial and Jiangsu Ancient Books Press (Nanjing: Jiangsu Ancient Books Press, 1991), vol. 5, p. 26.
11. Biographies may be found in *Zhongguo meishu nianjian*, 1949-1979, p. 306; *Banhua jicheng* vol. 5, p. 25.
12. Biographies may be found in *Zhongguo meishu nianjian*, 1949-1979, p. 339; *Banhua jicheng* vol. 5, p. 28.
13. Reproduced and mentioned in Li Hua, *Chinese Woodcuts*, p. 107.
14. Lu Di, *Modern Chinese Prints*, pp. 82-83.
15. Lu Di, *Modern Chinese Prints*, pp. 82-84.
16. Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: Norton, 1990), p. 448.
17. Ellen Johnston Laing has summarized this process particularly well. See her book *The Winking Owl: Art in the People's Republic of China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 13-16.
18. Previous publication of parts of the Herman collection may be found in Shirley Sun, *Modern Chinese Woodcuts* (San Francisco: Chinese Culture Foundation, 1979), and Lisa E. Rotondo, *Chinese Revolutionary Woodcuts, 1935-1948, from the Herman Collection*, *The Picker Art Gallery, Colgate University* (Middletown, Conn. and Hamilton, N.Y.: Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University, and Picker Art Gallery, Colgate University, 1984).
19. Reproduced in Rotondo, *Chinese Revolutionary Woodcuts*, p. 23, fig. 16.



Art for New
China,
1950–1980

The Victory of Socialist Realism: Oil Painting and the New Guohua

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From Japan's invasion in 1937 until its surrender to the Allies at the end of World War II, China was under foreign assault and occupation. Nor did the turmoil end in 1945, for eight years of Japanese aggression was followed immediately by four years of steadily intensifying civil war. This prolonged period of strife and chaos finally concluded with the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Although that time of upheaval saw the creation of individual works of power and beauty, it could not compare with the 1930s in artistic vitality. In the 1950s artists set themselves to establishing a new art for the newly constituted nation. The outpouring of prints of political and social protest against a government perceived as corrupt, incompetent, and indifferent, produced in Shanghai in the 1940s, subsided. Many artists were extremely optimistic as they set about rebuilding their nation.

In 1949 European-trained realist Xu Beihong (1895–1953) (see cats. 47, 61), then director of the National Peking Academy of Fine Arts, accepted Zhou Enlai's invitation to head the national art academy in Beijing that would absorb the former institution; from 1950 the new school was known as the Central Academy of Fine Arts. Modernist Ni Yide (1901–1970), who had joined the Communist party, directed the military committee that took over the National Hangzhou Arts Academy, which was soon renamed the East China Campus of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. These urban intellectuals, joined by Yan'an veterans Hu Yichuan (b. 1910), Yan Han (b. 1916), Mo Pu (b. 1915), and Jiang Feng (1910–1982) set about establishing a new art curriculum to meet the needs of China's new society. Over the course of the next decade private business enterprises, private land, and private educational and cultural institutions were folded into the new state-run institutional structures. Personnel were assigned according to the new institutional plans, in some cases deliberately dispersing well-established groups of artists in order to weaken possible foci of opposition to new policies and practices. New centralized art institutions became the laboratory for a socialist art.

The young government was acting on the belief that China needed a new art, an

art that would serve the masses. Within a decade government sponsorship and control had yielded a distinctive "art for the people." Mistakes in implementation were made in the first few years, and policy sometimes changed direction, but in general the efforts of the new art-education system to remold Chinese art were systematic and effective. Some kinds of art were no longer acceptable. Many styles that had flourished in the 1930s were reformed or eradicated: modernist art, which was considered bourgeois; traditionalist art, which was associated with feudalism and landlordism; religious art, which was banned as superstitious; and some forms of commercial art, which were deemed pornographic. Under the circumstances, any defense of nonrevolutionary art was as unacceptable as a defense of foot-binding.

In the new era style acquired strongly political connotations. The patriotic value of certain styles (as opposed to the perniciousness of others) was explicated, based on principles of Stalinist and Maoist cultural ideology, so that artists might know exactly the political implications of their choices. Some older artists tried, with varying degrees of sincerity, to accommodate themselves to the new standards, but the new art of China was primarily an art of the young. Training a young mind, like writing on a clean slate, was most effective.

Artist-revolutionaries, veterans of the Lu Xun Academy at Yan'an, led the way in defining what forms the new art would take, although national policy made it clear that Soviet models would take primacy.¹ Yan'an veteran Luo Gongliu (b. 1916), who had served with Hu Yichuan on the anti-Japanese woodcut team in northern China, was, like others of his background, responsible for implementing the new policies. Luo was one of the five Party members appointed to administer the Central Academy of Fine Arts; and he and a colleague were appointed in 1951 to obtain art work for a new Central Museum of Revolutionary History, to be located in the western part of Beijing's Forbidden City. Artists from all over the nation received commissions for large historical oil paintings for the new museum.

Luo's painting of 1951, *Mao Zedong Reporting on the Rectification in Yan'an*

(cat. 128), is not only a successful example of the new history painting, but by virtue of the artist's position it became something of a model. Commemorating Mao's largely successful effort to impose a unified artistic ideology on China's cultural world, it refers to an intense period of investigation and reindoctrination of the Party's artists and writers that occurred in 1942 and 1943. The ideology was subsequently enshrined by the publication of lectures that Mao Zedong had delivered during that campaign; the published version was entitled "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art." Mao's demand that artists selflessly serve the people and abandon all other artistic goals became doctrine. Luo's painting, by its very style and iconography, glorifies the doctrine whose articulation it depicts. The simple Yan'an prints of Yan Han and Gu Yuan had been attempts to instruct and motivate poor peasants in Shaanxi. Now, in Beijing, realistic oil paintings might serve an analogous purpose.

Trained under Lin Fengmian and his francophile faculty at the National Hangzhou Arts Academy, Luo Gongliu was better equipped intellectually and technically than many revolutionary print makers to take on the new task of producing Chinese Communist oil paintings. And from 1955 to 1958 he received postgraduate training at the Repin Institute of Arts in Leningrad, where some two dozen young Chinese artists studied before the rupture between the Soviet Union and China in 1960. Also during the fifties, a Soviet portrait painter named Konstantin M. Maksimov (b. 1913) was dispatched to Beijing to teach oil painting to promising students at the Central Academy of Fine Arts. Thus, by the end of the decade a substantial cohort of young artists had been trained in the Soviet manner.

When it was decided, on rather short notice, to erect ten major architectural monuments in Beijing to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the People's Republic, artists were ready to provide the paintings for these and for the Great Hall of the People. In 1959 a highly prestigious set of commissions went out to artists all over the nation (see cats. 129, 130). For various reasons, including the political uncertainty generated by the Great Leap Forward, some of the new dis-

plays were not opened to the public, and a second painting campaign, this one directed by Luo Gongliu, was launched in 1961 (see cats. 131–133, 138, and fig. 1).

The resulting oil paintings are historical in subject matter and form part of a new revolutionary iconography that was being enshrined in the galleries of the Museum of the Chinese Revolution. Although some of them closely follow Soviet patterns, their subjects are completely Chinese. In *The Torch Light Parade in Yan'an*, 1959 (cat. 129), Cai Liang (b. 1932) depicted the idyllic society of Yan'an in the 1940s, where peasants, soldiers, and artists dwelt in legendary harmony. *Liu Shaoqi and the Anyuan Coal Miners*, by Hou Yimin (b. 1930), may have been one of the most politically charged works of the 1961 history painting campaign because it injected, into a seemingly endless series of Mao portraits, a heroic depiction of his competitor in the making of China's revolution, Liu Shaoqi (1898–1969).² Liu was appointed chairman of the People's Republic of China in 1959 after Mao Zedong unwillingly retired in the face of the disastrous famine caused by the economic policies of his Great Leap Forward. Neither the painting nor its subject survived the revenge Mao and his allies took against Liu Shaoqi during the first few years of the Cultural Revolution, which they launched in 1966. Hou Yimin's subsequent reconstruction of the most famous work of his career, exhibited in the present exhibition, is fairly faithful to the original (cat. 133). Military valor and heroic battles in China's struggle for freedom are commemorated in Zhan Jianjun's *Five Heroes of Mount Langya*, 1959 (cat. 130), Quan Shanshi's *Unyielding Heroism*, 1961 (cat. 132), Yin Rongsheng's *Battle of Hesheng Bridge*, 1961 (fig. 1), Luo Gongliu's *Mao Zedong at Mount Jinggang*, 1961 (cat. 134), and He Kongde's *Before the Attack*, 1963 (cat. 136).

Mount Langya, in Yi county, Hubei Province, was the site of fierce resistance by a group of five soldiers of the Shanxi-Chahaer-Hebei Military Region while covering the evacuation of the main Chinese forces before the Japanese advance in 1941. Zhan Jianjun shows them just before they ran out of bullets, after which they smashed their rifles and leaped to their deaths. In *Unyielding Heroism*, Quan Shan-



Figure 1. Yin Rongsheng (b. 1929). *The Battle of Hesheng Bridge*, 1961. Oil on canvas; 145 x 300 cm. Museum of the Chinese Revolution, Beijing.

shi, who was trained in Leningrad, commemorates the courageous dedication of rural fighters in peasant uprisings that led to the establishment of the first Chinese Soviets. *Battle of Hesheng Bridge* dramatizes the defeat of warlord Wu Peifu at Wuchang as part of the Northern Expedition that in 1926 briefly reunified the nation. Hesheng Bridge crossed a strategic pass in Xianning in Hubei Province. Luo Gongliu, in *Mao Zedong at Mount Jinggang*, portrays Mao in 1928, awaiting the arrival of troops under Zhu De and Chen Yi to join his forces at Mount Jinggang in Jiangxi Province.

All of these artists except Luo received their higher education in the post-1949 period, either in Leningrad or at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing. Several of Maksimov's students at the academy in Beijing employed the technique, prevalent in Soviet Socialist Realist paintings, of lowering the viewpoint of a composition in order to monumentalize their subject. This can be seen in three of the commissioned paintings, by Maksimov students Zhan Jianjun (b.1931), Jin Shangyi (b. 1934), and He Kongde (b. 1925) (cats. 130, 131, 136). In Jin's painting *Mao Zedong at the December Meeting*, 1961 (cat. 131), the monumentalizing technique is applied to the image of the Chinese leader; in He's *Before the Attack* and Zhan's *Five Heroes* it renders common soldiers suitably dauntless.

Certain changes in style began to appear after the Sino-Soviet rift of 1960. Wu Biduan (b. 1926) and Jin Shangyi, in their *Chairman Mao Standing with People of Asian, Africa, and Latin America*, 1961 (cat. 135), did not use vivid effects of light

and shadow or painterly technique to dramatize the subject—China's leadership of the Third World, which would prove to be an important political doctrine—but instead employed a style associated with what was called the "nationalization of oil painting." This approach, which was increasingly advocated by teachers and artists of the sixties, including Dong Xiwen, Jin Shangyi's mentor at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, referred to any means of imbuing oil painting with recognizably Chinese aesthetics. Some of the experiments in "nationalized" oil painting involved outlining the figures, as they might be in a New Year's woodcut, and using flat patches of unmodulated color rather than painterly textures (see also cat. 137). This simplification of color, perhaps intended to evoke woodcuts, was also considered by these young artists to be part of the Chinese tradition.

In *Mao Zedong at Mount Jinggang*, a history painting that is quite atypical of the period, Luo Gongliu placed his hero in front of a mountain peak that looks as though it were lifted from a well-known classical Chinese painting. The oddly elongated brush strokes and the darker dabs and dots that he used for the distant foliage strongly resemble the texture strokes and dots of traditional ink painting, thus giving the oil painting a distinctively "national" feeling. Other paintings from this period seem to have compositions taken directly from works by artists of the Yan'an generation—compare, for example, *The Battle at Hesheng Bridge* with Gu Yuan's 1948 woodcut *Human Bridge* (cat. 126)—although it should be noted that the artists of that earlier period were emulating their own Soviet models.

The paintings commissioned for the Ten Great Buildings, as the new museums and government buildings were called, strikingly reflect the expectation that *guohua* ("national painting")—modern painting on Chinese paper or silk—might serve the same public function as oil painting. Of 244 paintings commissioned in the 1959 campaign, 136 were *guohua* paintings. Perhaps the best known is Fu Baoshi (1904–1965) and Guan Shanyue's *This Land So Rich in Beauty*, 1959, painted for the newly built Great Hall of the People. About five and a half by nine meters (18 x 29½ feet), it has served as the back-



Figure 2. *Fu Baoshi* (1904–1965) and *Guan Shanyue* (b. 1912). *This Land So Rich in Beauty*, 1959. Ink and color on paper. Great Hall of the People.

ground for many diplomatic photographs, including published photographs of Richard Nixon's visit to China (see fig. 2).

China's landscape, in a radical change in its significance, had begun to serve a patriotic function as the subject of nationalistic celebration. Among other artists who took up this challenge were the brilliant *Shi Lu* (1919–1982), who, in *Fighting in Northern Shaanxi*, 1959 (cat. 141), depicted Mao Zedong in the midst of an extraordinary landscape composition. Standing at the edge of an escarpment and contemplating his next military move in the difficult northern terrain, Mao takes on the monumental persona of the vast, rugged ranges that stretch to the horizon. From this time on these very mountains, which had sheltered the Communist base at Yan'an, personified the heroic virtue of the Communist troops.

Heroic figures were shown in a landscape setting in many works done in ink on paper in the new Socialist Realist style. Some artists, such as Cantonese painter *Yang Zhiguang* (b. 1930), have continued to value the beauty of brush and ink: Yang frequently employs particularly rich strokes of ink in unexpected places, as in drapery folds, foliage, and other minor passages—the boldly brushed plants in the lower-left corner of his *Mao Zedong at the Peasants' Training School*, 1959 (cat. 140), for example. After studying

briefly with *Gao Jianfu*, Yang attended the Central Academy of Fine Arts, graduating in 1953. As an art professor, Yang pioneered the teaching of the *guohua* version of the monumental style.

In 1959 Manchurian artist *Wang Shenglie*, who during the Japanese occupation of his home region was trained in a polished style of painting called *Nihonga*, transformed the appealing female figures of traditional Japanese painting into the fierce *Eight Female Martyrs* (cat. 142) of the Women's Regiment of China's Anti-Japanese Amalgamated Army. So committed were these eight women to their cause that in October of 1938 they drowned rather than surrender.

Due primarily to political and economic mistakes in the late 1950s, China in 1959–1961 experienced severe food shortages, a widespread famine referred to as the Three-Year Natural Disaster. The crisis goaded the regime to engage all talented people in creative and constructive solutions to China's problems. Artists took advantage of this brief period of political liberalization to produce quite varied work.

In the wake of that difficult time a new iconographic type appeared in Socialist Realist art. Whereas a typical painting done in 1960, such as *Li Qi's Portrait of Mao Zedong* (cat. 139), glorifies China's leader, oil paintings such as *Sun Zixi's In Front of Tiananmen*, 1964, and *Wen Bao's Four Girls*, 1962 (cats. 137, 138), have China's happy people as their subject. By this time *guohua* painters such as *Liu Wenxi* (b. 1933) and *Fang Zengxian* (b. 1931) demonstrated a thorough mastery of Socialist Realism while still utilizing the blank backgrounds expected in a traditional Chinese figure painting, as in the former's *Four Generations*, 1962 (cat. 143) and the latter's *Telling a Red Tale*, 1964 (cat. 144). They developed new types of brushwork that could vividly express the nature of their subject, thus emphasizing their break from tradition without abandoning the importance of the outline in Chinese figure painting. Liu used roughly drawn black lines to emphasize the rustic strength of the northwestern peasants in *Four Generations*, while the southern-born Fang relied on a more lively line and a somewhat more complex receding composition to animate the storyteller in *Telling*

a *Red Tale*, who engages his neighbors with accounts of the Red Army's exploits.

Traditional artists and pure landscapists had not fared well during the new Chinese nation's first decade. Zhou Enlai intervened on their behalf in 1956 to establish research institutes where traditional artists might be permitted to preserve their craft. Others were encouraged to travel, at government expense, for the purpose of developing a new landscape art that might reflect the real appearance of China's beautiful land. They were a diverse group of older artists, and their work displays a variety of approaches. Wu Hufan (1894–1968) was appointed to the newly founded Shanghai Institute of Chinese Painting. His exquisite *Twin Pines and Layered Green*, 1959 (cat. 147), shows no traces of the historic political changes through which he had lived, and could have been painted a decade, or even two decades, earlier. Lin Fengmian (1900–1991) was by no means a traditional artist, but a similar timelessness and repudiation of Socialist Realism pervaded the work of this former modernist and founding director of the National Hangzhou Arts Academy. Lin's *Wild Geese* (cat. 152) and *Autumn Colors* (cat. 153), depictions of southern China's landscape, have a melancholy air. From 1949 to 1979 Lin painted in virtual isolation, then moved to Hong Kong when it became possible to do so. Such complete resistance to Socialist Realism was, however, uncommon. He Tianjian (1891–1977), who stoutly defended the potential for innovation within traditionalist *guohua* in his writings of the 1930s, was appointed to the Shanghai Institute of Chinese Painting when it opened in 1956. Unlike Wu Hufan, He attempted to integrate modern subjects into his landscapes. He attempted to celebrate the achievements of the new government within traditional landscapes, as in *Meishan Reservoir*, 1959 (cat. 145), where a classical depiction of towering mountains and a river also includes, however inconspicuously, the man-made reservoir.

Lin Fengmian's former student Li Keran (1907–1989), who had exhibited modernist oils in the 1930s, turned more and more toward *guohua* during the war. He was later appointed to the faculty of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, and in the late 1950s he traveled and sketched

throughout China. His *Spring in Jiangnan*, 1962 (cat. 149), attests to his growing interest in using effects of contrasting light and dark in Chinese painting.

The equally innovative Shi Lu used colored texture strokes in a new way to produce a dramatic vision of the perils of travel and work on China's second-longest river, in *The Banks of the Yellow River*, 1959 (cat. 148). His characteristic palette of reds and browns came to be associated particularly with the northwestern landscape. This kind of painting exerted a strong influence on the younger generation of painters, especially Yang Lizhou (b. 1942) and Wang Yingchun (b. 1942), as can be seen in their *The Yellow River Roars*, 1980–1981 (cat. 166).

Pan Tianshou (1898–1971), who had undertaken intensive drawing from nature as part of a mandatory reform program instituted at the academy in Hangzhou, emerged in this highly nationalistic era a powerful spokesman for the value of traditional Chinese painting. He attained a mature, and somewhat minimalist, personal style in works such as *Red Lotus*, 1963 (cat. 150), combining richly brushed ink—an approach that he had been exploring since the 1940s—with a new precision founded in his careful nature studies. He also monumentalized the fruits of his studies in a series of large flower-and-bird paintings, which proved by their combination of compositional power and beauty of brushwork that Chinese painting could successfully compete with oil painting in the sphere of public art, as in *Clearing after Rain*, 1964 (cat. 151). The *xieyi* (expressionistic, free-brush) style of painting has rarely been employed on such a scale or with such power.

Throughout its history, but beginning on a large scale with the 1942–1943 rectification campaign in Yan'an, the Chinese Communist party has conducted political campaigns against its perceived or actual enemies. In the worst of these, such as the Anti-Rightist Campaign, members of certain factions within the Party and anyone who criticized the Party's administrative practices or policies were condemned, and many of these were sent to labor camps or prisons in remote parts of the country. This internecine conflict set the stage for one of the great man-made calamities of modern Chinese history, the Great Prole-

tarian Cultural Revolution. Early in 1966 Mao Zedong, Jiang Qing (his wife, a former actress), and other allies of Mao began attacking their opponents in the party, most notably Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi, and in particular castigating those who administered the cultural and propaganda fields. By that summer Mao had mobilized China's youth in a great campaign of protest against party administrators. Millions of teenagers were given free transportation to Beijing to watch Chairman Mao's motorcade proceed down Chang'an Street in front of Tiananmen Square, a sight that stirred many of them into frenzies of devotion.

In the course of rooting out class enemies, and with Mao's blessing, the Party and the young people dismantled China's governmental and institutional structures, precipitating chaos. Most educated people and Party officials who were middle-aged or older were imprisoned or sent to labor camps. Their homes were ransacked, their supposed crimes were posted in large notices in their neighborhoods and public buildings, and many of them were beaten and paraded through the streets as targets of public ridicule. China's army was mobilized to maintain basic societal functions, effectively administering the country for much of the following decade.

Particularly during the first five years of the Cultural Revolution, the personality cult of Mao Zedong was promoted relentlessly. Young artists, caught up in the enthusiasm of a new revolution, made especially vivid contributions to this effort. Lin Yong (b. 1942), a young graduate of the Guangzhou Academy of Art, where Yang Zhiguang taught *guohua*, was assigned in 1968 to work in a local cultural palace in Doumen county, Guangdong Province. He was soon reassigned to the history-painting team associated with the Guangzhou Peasants' Movement Training School, the locale depicted in Yang's 1959 painting of Mao and a group of peasant students (cat. 140), which commemorated a training class for rural revolutionaries taught by Mao in Guangzhou in 1926. The training school, like most sites in Mao's hagiography, was reorganized as a museum-shrine to him.

Lin Yong was one of the earliest and most talented creators of the new *guohua*

iconography of Chairman Mao, setting a standard for those who came after. His mural-size *Great Job! (Investigating the Peasant Movement in Hunan)*, 1970 (cat. 155), builds on the earlier developments in *guohua* figure painting by Fang Zengxian and Yang Zhiguang, but adds to them not only a larger scale, but also bold color, dramatic gestures, and a spectacular setting. This work could attract viewers in a way that few oil paintings of the period might. Perhaps most notable is the work's power to convey the young artist's belief in the absolute benevolence of China's revolutionary leader.

A shift in the mysterious upper echelons of China's government occurred after the aircraft carrying Mao's heir apparent, General Lin Biao, was shot down on 13 September 1971. The arts, under the supervision of Jiang Qing, received greater support and supervision from Beijing. The unique style of painting that resulted has been widely attributed to Jiang's particular tastes, and was supported by her tyrannical administrative practices. This particular form of figure painting, castigated by artists in the Post-Mao period as "*hong-guang-liang*" ("red, smooth, and glowing"), emerged in 1971 and was widely practiced for the next five years. Lin Yong's *The Spirit of Yan'an Shines Forever*, 1971 (cat. 156), is a pioneering example of the new style. Iconographically, it builds on the growing emphasis on Yan'an, with its communal subsistence economy, as the revolution's holy site; and it includes a pagoda (the traditional Chinese tower) in the background. Its most striking stylistic characteristics are the ruddy, perfectly smooth complexions of the figures, especially Mao's, and the scene's theatrical illumination, as though the figures might be onstage. Some works from this period are painted in such a way as to suggest that the source of illumination for the subsidiary figures might be Mao himself.

Lin Yong's 1970 painting *Great Job!* is a very successful individual effort to perfect the Socialist Realist *guohua* style, which had been developing over the course of the previous two decades. His 1971 *Spirit of Yan'an*, though, was probably prepared under new guidelines from Beijing, as part of a national stylistic movement. Lin Wenxi (b. 1933), almost ten years older than Lin, became a master of this new

style, as exemplified in a work of similar iconographic content. *New Spring in Yan'an*, 1972 (cat. 157), goes even further in the deification of Chairman Mao and his policies, by surrounding him not only with smiling workers but also with well-fed and even ruddier-checked children. Brightly colored works such as this, which include such iconographic touches as drums inscribed with simple slogans promoting economic self-sufficiency, were intended to evoke the aesthetics of New Year's folk prints of the Yan'an area, and thus the revolutionary spirit of Yan'an and its art.

Some older artists also tried to meet the new iconographic requirements, at least to the best of their ability. Traditionalist painter Qian Songyan (1899–1985), who had traveled around China with Song Wenzhi (b. 1918) and other Nanjing artists in the 1950s to develop new ways of painting the landscape, turned his attention to the sacred source of the revolution in *Sunrise in Yan'an After Snow*, 1972 (cat. 154). A pagoda dominates the picture as it must have dominated the actual landscape, but it is skillfully balanced by a highway bridge, a marker of post-1949 progress. The whole is illuminated by the rosy glow of dawn, or perhaps—to those who wish to read it so—of Communism.

Mao's mobilization of millions of teenagers to attack his enemies was a Pandora's box. Calls for revolution and the overthrow of authority begat much senseless violence, destruction, and cruelty. To deal with the social chaos this had produced, which ranged from lawlessness to unemployment, nearly all urban teenagers were sent to work, beginning in 1968, in the distant countryside. The back-breaking labor, much of it administered by the same labor reform camps to which political offenders had been sent a decade earlier, may have been agonizing, but was also profoundly revelatory of the grinding hardship of peasant life to many of these rusticated youths.

As the government was gradually reconstructed during the early 1970s, a system of national art exhibitions was put into place. Major national exhibitions were held in 1972 and 1974, and smaller ones took place all over the nation. The shows were the fulfillment of Jiang Qing's vision—Socialist Realist, but a version of

the style quite different from that of the Soviet-trained artists of a decade earlier.

Shen Jiawei's *Standing Guard for Our Great Motherland*, 1974 (cat. 159), was in its time an icon of the new art, although even this work was "improved" by Jiang Qing's art committee, who smoothed and rouged the figures' faces. Shen Jiawei (b. 1948), rusticated from the eastern coastal province of Zhejiang to cultivate the frigid soil of a military farm on the Soviet border with Heilongjiang, painted the scene from his own experience in that region. Border guards, rendered heroically, stand on a lookout tower in the freezing wind to guard their nation against a Soviet attack.

This generation of artists, sent to China's most impoverished areas, gained an understanding of rural poverty and a genuine appreciation for the lives of people who worked in China's hinterlands and for the value of human labor. Most of those who were able to pursue painting during their period of rustication turned for subject matter to the types of people with whom they worked, a trend encouraged by the authorities. For example, in 1974 Chen Yanning (b. 1945) painted a barefoot doctor in Guangdong, his home region (cat. 160). Tang Muli (b. 1947), a native of Shanghai who was interested in science, depicted the effectiveness of the Chinese art of acupuncture in preventing pain, in *Acupuncture Anesthesia*, 1972 (cat. 161). And in *Willows in Spring Wind*, 1974 (cat. 162), Zhou Shuqiao (b. 1938) painted a happy group of youngsters preparing to depart for their new rural homes. Of particular note in art of this period are the many images of heroic young women.

The deaths of both Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong in 1976 brought the Cultural Revolution to an end. Leaders referred to as the "Gang of Four," including Mao's wife, were arrested and, after Deng Xiaoping had consolidated his power, put on trial. Many of their most active supporters were jailed, and some, including the woman who supervised the national art exhibitions, soon committed suicide, as did Madame Mao many years later.

The extraordinary range of experiences undergone by the young artists of the period are reflected in a painting by Shanghai native Chen Danqing, *Tears Flooding the Autumnal Fields*, 1976 (cat.



Figure 3. Jiang Zhaohe (1904–1986).
Refugees. 1943. Ink and color on paper.

164), which shows people weeping at the news of Mao's death. Chen spent some time in Tibet toward the end of the Cultural Revolution, and commemorated various events of 1976 as though through the eyes of the Tibetans. In an era with no official direction and thus no official art, this powerful picture reiterated the hero-worship of the previous two decades, but at the same time broke with the "red, smooth, and glowing" painting conventions of the era that had just ended.

By 1979, the year Deng Xiaoping returned to power, a rejection of the Cultural Revolution was under way, a development that is evident in both the style and the iconography of paintings from that year. When the new administration ordered the Museum of the Chinese Revolution to reflect a less Mao-centered view of history, new works were commissioned. The Soviet-trained Lin Gang (b. 1924) and his wife, Pang Xunqin's daughter Pang Tao (b. 1934), painted a heroic but somewhat gloomy image of the Long March, *Eventful Years*, 1979 (cat. 163), in which General Zhu De is shown leading his weary Communist troops on a perilous shortcut through grassy marshland. This episode in the Long March saved the Communists from certain extirpation by the Nationalists, but many soldiers died in the treacherous bogs. Though still quite theatrical, this painting is a first, significant step away from the bright, artificial style that was obligatory during the Cultural Revolution. Here, the real hardships entailed by heroism are emphasized.

The Taking of the Presidential Palace, 1977 (cat. 165), was commissioned from two Shanghai artists, Chen Yifei (b. 1946) and Wei Jingshan (b. 1943), by the Military Museum in Beijing. This dramatic oil painting displays an extraordinary level of technical polish, which was characteristic of several Shanghai oil painters of this generation. Chen and Wei used Western European sources in addition to Soviet ones as technical and compositional models. Their grand image epitomizes the Red Army's victory over the Nationalist troops in the ultimate gesture of triumph: raising the red flag over the former presidential palace. Here, too, the artificially ruddy complexions of Cultural Revolution heroes were avoided. This style of photographic realism strongly influenced some academic oil painters in China in subsequent decades.

A similar departure from both the iconography and the style of the Cultural Revolution can be seen in an influential *guohua* painting by Zhou Sicong (1939–1995), *The People and the Prime Minister*, 1979 (cat. 158). This memorial to Zhou Enlai, who died eight months before Mao in 1976 and was not given a state funeral by the Maoist-controlled government, presents an iconographic and political alternative to the Mao-centered imagery of the Cultural Revolution era. The moving inscription on the painting is a quotation from an earthquake victim in Xingtai in Hubei Province, recalling that Zhou Enlai, who was then extremely ill, visited his village to comfort the people who had lost their homes. He laments that Zhou will be unable to fulfill his promise to return to see their reconstruction, but he vows to wait for the great man nonetheless. Here, Zhou Sicong attempted to restore a pre-Jiang Qing style of figure painting, one that was not "red, smooth, and glowing," and that might recall the work of Yang Zhiguang or that of their common teacher, Jiang Zhaohe (see fig. 3). As an act of mourning, *The People and the Prime Minister* is suitably somber, primarily relying on black and gray tonalities.

When the art schools were reestablished in the late seventies, students brought to their classes memories of cataclysmic experiences that were perhaps exceeded only by those of the youth of the World War II generation. Some members



Figure 4. Du Jian (b. 1933). *Advancing Amid Swift Currents*. 1963. Formerly collection of the Chinese Museum of Revolutionary History.

of this early post-Cultural Revolution generation of art students continued to consider painting an act of patriotism. Their rediscovery of art sometimes involved reviving the styles and subjects of older revolutionaries who had been unjustly condemned. A heroic history painting by Yang Lizhou and Wang Yingchun, *The Yellow River Roars*, 1980–1981 (cat. 166)—their graduation painting—is related to several earlier revolutionary history pictures. These include a large oil by Du Jian (b. 1933), *Advancing Amid Swift Currents* (fig. 4), which was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, and small landscapes such as *The Banks of the Yellow River* (cat. 148) by the talented northwestern master Shi Lu, a star of the late 1950s art establishment who had been hounded during the Cultural Revolution. For artists of this group, the history of China's war of liberation and post-liberation reconstruction was a tale of triumph, in which the Cultural Revolution was a distressing aberration, deserving only to be ignored.

Other paintings made after Deng Xiaoping's rise to power in 1979 take a more questioning view of history. Luo Zhongli's (b. 1948) painting *Father*, 1980 (cat. 169), received an extraordinary reception when it was first exhibited that year. It will not seem strange to Americans familiar with the work of Chuck Close, some of which Luo knew from reproductions. For Chinese viewers, however, it committed something akin to iconograph-

ic and stylistic heresy. To them, the enormous scale—8 1/2 by 5 feet—recalled portraits of Chairman Mao. They could accept comparably heroic portraits of other leaders, such as Zhou Enlai and Zhu De, in place of Mao (who largely disappeared from portraiture after 1979), but that grandiose scale was horrifyingly inappropriate to a picture of an ignorant, wrinkled peasant. It was true that Mao had urged artists to follow the people, but did that mean he advocated portraits of such unvarnished realism? An even more critical question, to some observers, was: How could a peasant still look so poor and downtrodden in the age of socialism? To young viewers, especially those who had recently returned from working in the countryside, Luo's painting represented the reality of what they saw there—wrinkles, dirt, and all—and they welcomed it.

Another trend of this period is associated with the "Scar" or "Wounded" literature of the late 1970s. Descriptions of the terrible and usually senseless suffering inflicted by the Cultural Revolution burst forth like a flood at this time. Among the most distressing were stories of violence between factions of young Red Guards, who inflicted injury and even death in the name of a false revolution. Cheng Conglin (b. 1954), from Sichuan Province, where many of the bloodiest intramural battles were fought, turned his Socialist Realist training in an unprecedented direction, criticizing the history of his own socialist era in *A Snowy Day in 1968*, 1979 (cat. 167).

Chen Yifei, in *Looking at History from My Space*, 1979 (cat. 168), shows a rear view of himself quizzically regarding China's recent chaotic past. The Communist party was born of the iconoclastic May Fourth student demonstrations in 1919, and inheritance of reformist principles fundamental to the Party's legitimacy. The sixtieth anniversary of the 1919 event corresponded with Deng Xiaoping's 1979 emergence as China's new leader. Deng rallied support for his new economic policies and against his opponents by reviving May Fourth reformist slogans, particularly a quartet that praised science and democracy and attacked imperialism and feudalism. In this image the artist appears to gaze at a photographic collage of events that took place during the 1910s and 1920s, at the height of the May Fourth

Movement's revolutionary struggles. The self Chen has depicted may, like most urban intellectuals of the late 1970s, be in the process of reassessing his nation's progress in fulfilling these goals. Is he, in harmony with Deng Xiaoping's policies of the time, implicitly criticizing Mao Zedong's failures? Or is he expressing a more individualistic uncertainty regarding his own place in history? His apparently introspective response to his nation's revolutionary struggle is ambiguous, a quality that has given the work a lasting psychological power, in part, at least, because it permits viewers of different cultural backgrounds and political philosophies to interpret it in very different ways.

Mao Lizi (Zhang Zhunli; b. 1950), at one time a set designer for the Chinese Air Force, was a leading member of the quasi-dissident Stars (*Xingxing*) group. Like Scar artists, the Stars rejected the ideology of Cultural Revolution art, but they also rejected the artistic forms and even the institutional structure of the Chinese art world. Mao Lizi was unique among the Stars for painting in a realist manner, but unlike Cheng Conglin or Chen Yifei, Mao Lizi often deployed his skill for distinctly ironic purposes. His subjects often comprise physical details of the Beijing environment that he uses to suggest a psychological story. Many of his trompe l'oeil images represent in intimate detail the dilapidated and graffiti-marred old doors to Beijing housing compounds. *Hesitating* (cat. 170), the work in the present exhibition, is a similar, almost voyeuristic examination of a Beijing sidewalk that has been littered with cigarette butts. The painting, as its title indicates, represents the personal remnants of an unknown individual's purposeless pacing.³

Artists of this generation have continued, over the two decades since Mao's death, to question their own experiences and their personal and national histories. In *Family Tree*, 1997 (cat. 172), Zhou Changjiang (b. 1950) has constructed, from miscellaneous photographic images, a genealogy for a fictional family. Given the traditional Chinese emphasis on history and family, these photographs might represent all Chinese as an imaginary single clan. At the same time, however, the

anonymity of the portraits robs them of legibility. The imaginary history is composed of fragments of many people's stories, put together in a way that means nothing to any single individual. Such ambiguity epitomizes the uncertainty felt by many people in this time of rapid change. Is this history the history of China as a whole? Has the history of China effaced that of any individual? Is this history as meaningless as a collection of unrelated photographs? Or can a Chinese artist simply pick a history, any Chinese history, and claim it as his or her own? Painters at middle age are asking themselves, each other, and their viewers such questions. And contemporary artists have been defining their past by means of their present.

NOTES

1. Two excellent studies of art in this period are Ellen Johnston Laing, *The Winking Owl: Art in the People's Republic of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), and Jerome Silbergeld with Gong Jisui, *Contradictions: Artistic Life, the Socialist State, and the Chinese Painter Li Huasheng* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993). A more detailed discussion of the mechanisms by which the new art-education system was used to produce a Chinese socialist art may be found in my own book *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1979* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).
2. For previous discussions of this painting, see Laing, *Winking Owl*, pp. 38-39, and Andrews, *Painters and Politics*, pp. 242-43.
3. For other examples of his work, see Joan Lebold Cohen, *The New Chinese Painting, 1949-1986* (New York: Abrams, 1987), pp. 61-62.

128. Luo Gonglin (b. 1916)
*Mao Zedong Reporting on the Rectification
in Yan'an*
1951
Oil on canvas; 161 x 236 cm
Museum of the Chinese Revolution,
Beijing



129. Cai Liang (b. 1932)

The Torchlight Parade in Yan'an

1959

Oil on canvas; 164 x 375 cm

Museum of the Chinese Revolution,
Beijing



130. Zhan Jianjun (b. 1931)

Five Heroes of Mount Langya

1959

Oil on canvas; 185 x 203 cm

Museum of the Chinese Revolution,

Beijing



131. Jin Shangyi (b. 1934)
Mao Zedong at the December Meeting
1961
Oil on canvas; 158 x 131 cm
Museum of the Chinese Revolution,
Beijing



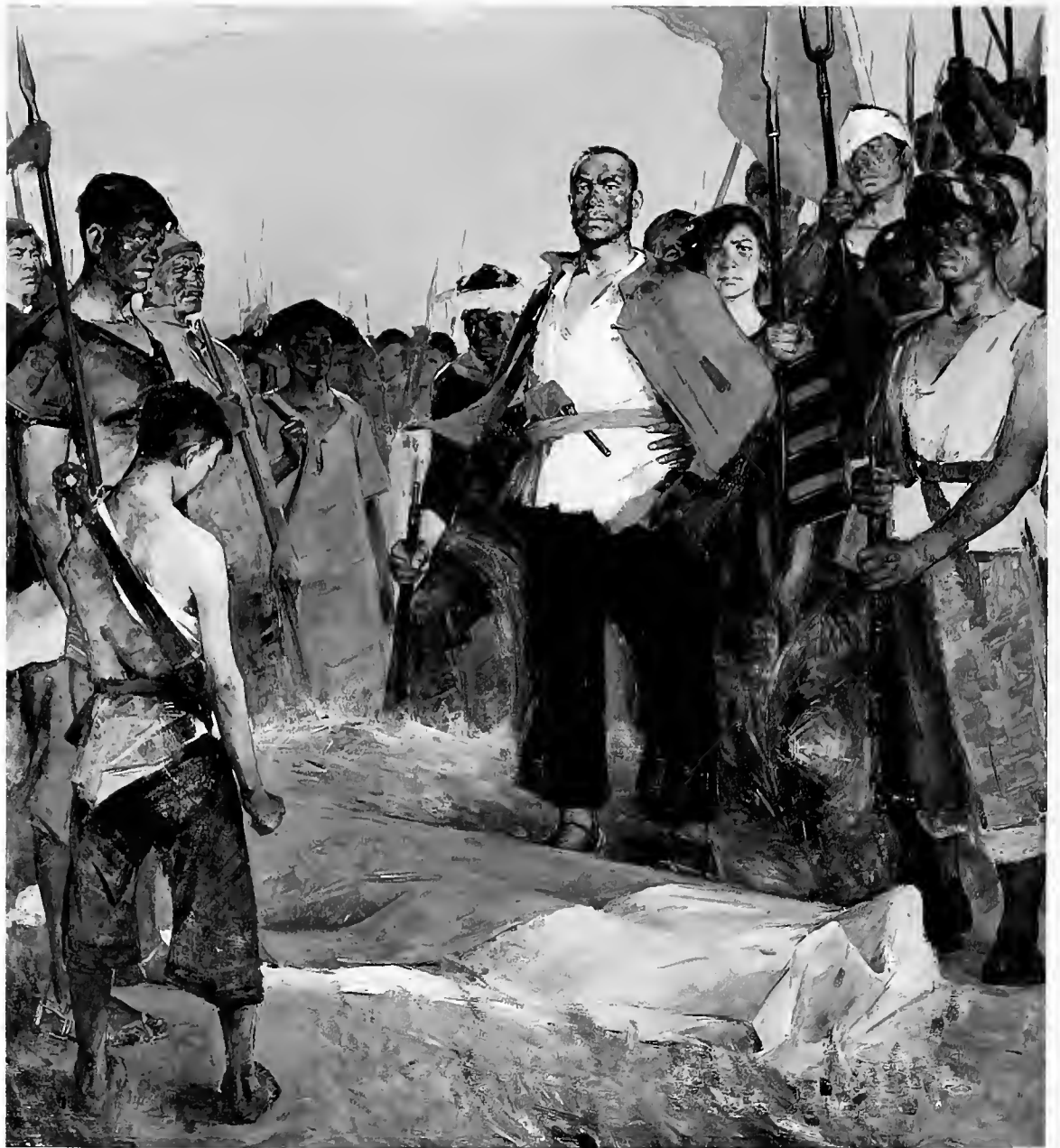
132. Quan Shanshi (b. 1930)

Unyielding Heroism

1961

Oil on canvas; 233 x 217 cm

Museum of the Chinese Revolution,
Beijing



133. **Hou Yimin** (b. 1930)
Liu Shaoqi and the Anyuan Coal Miners
1961 (1979 version; original destroyed
ca. 1968)
Oil on canvas; 162 x 333 cm
Museum of the Chinese Revolution,
Beijing



134. Luo Gongliu (b. 1916)

Mao Zedong at Mount Jinggang

1961

Oil on canvas; 150 x 220 cm

Museum of the Chinese Revolution,

Beijing



135. **Wu Biduan** (b. 1926) and

Jin Shangyi (b. 1934)

*Chairman Mao Standing with People of
Asia, Africa, and Latin America*

1961

Oil on canvas; 143 x 156 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



136. He Kongde (b. 1925)

Before the Attack

1963

Oil on canvas; 189 x 140 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



137. **Sun Zixi** (b. 1929)

In Front of Tiananmen

1964

Oil on canvas; 155 x 285 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing

138. **Wen Bao** (b. 1938)

Four Girls

1962

Oil on canvas; 110 x 202 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



139. Li Qi (b. 1928)

Portrait of Mao Zedong

1960

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

197 x 117.5 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



140. Yang Zhiguang (b. 1930)

*Mao Zedong at the Peasants' Movement
Training School*

1959

Ink and color on paper; 141 x 205 cm

Museum of the Chinese Revolution,
Beijing



141. Shi Lu (1919–1982)

Fighting in Northern Shaanxi

1959

Ink and color on paper; 238 x 216 cm

Museum of the Chinese Revolution,

Beijing



142. Wang Shenglie (b. 1923)

Eight Female Martyrs

1959

Ink and color on paper; 144 x 367 cm

Museum of the Chinese Revolution,

Beijing



143. Liu Wenxi (b. 1933)

Four Generations

1962

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

118 x 98 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



144. Fang Zengxian (b. 1931)

Telling a Red Tale

1964

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

96 x 183 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



145. He Tianjian (1891-1977)

Meishan Reservoir

1959

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

105.5 x 68.3 cm

Shanghai Museum



146. He Tianjian (1891-1977)

The Tenth Anniversary of the People's Republic of China

1959

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

133 x 68 cm

Collection of Michael Y.W. Shih, Tainan



147. **Wu Hufan** (1894–1968)

Twin Pines and Layered Green

1959

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

160 x 100 cm

Shanghai Institute of Chinese Painting



148. Shi Lu (1919–1982)

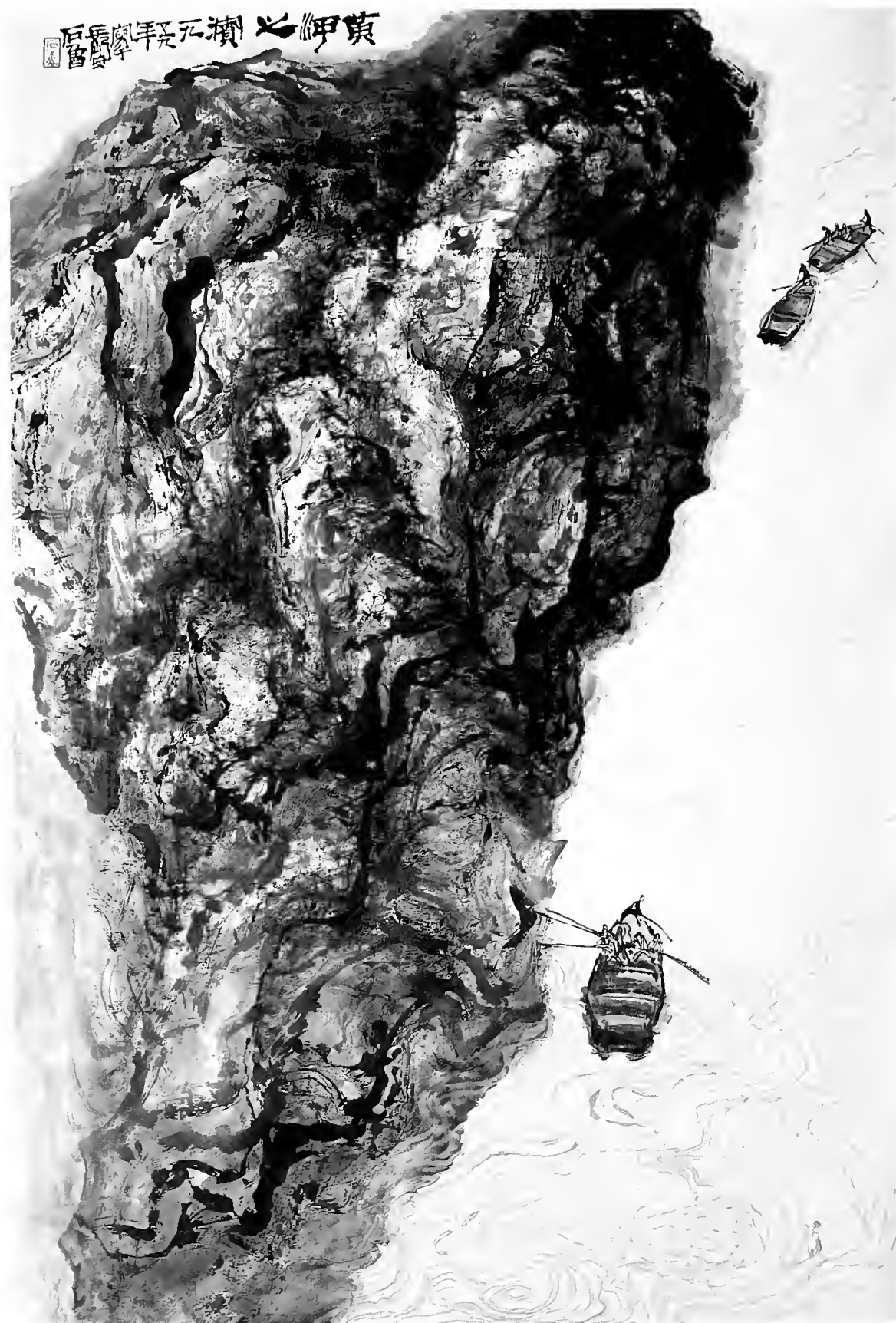
The Banks of the Yellow River

1959

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

98 x 66 cm

China International Exhibition Agency,
Beijing



149. Li Keran (1907–1989)

Spring in Jiangnan

1962

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

69.2 x 49 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



150. Pan Tianshou (1898-1971)

Red Lotus

1963

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

161.5 x 99 cm

Pan Tianshou Memorial, Hangzhou



151. Pan Tianshou (1898-1971)

Clearing After Rain

1962

Ink and color on paper;

141 x 365.3 cm

Pan Tianshou Memorial, Hangzhou





152. Lin Fengmian (1900–1991)

Wild Geese

Undated

Ink and color on paper;

71 x 71 cm

M. K. Lau Collection, Ltd.,

Hong Kong

153. Lin Fengmian (1900–1991)

Autumn Colors

Undated

Ink and color on paper;

71 x 71 cm

M. K. Lau Collection, Ltd.,

Hong Kong



154. Qian Songyan (1899-1985)

Sunrise in Yan'an After Snow

1972

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

113 x 67.5 cm

Jiangsu Provincial Art Gallery, Nanjing



155. Lin Yong (b. 1942)

*Great Job! (Investigating the Peasant
Movement in Hunan)*

1970

Ink and color on paper; 213 x 260 cm

Private collection



156. **Lin Yong** (b. 1942)
The Spirit of Yan'an Shines Forever
1971
Ink and color on paper; 220 x 380 cm
Private collection



157. Liu Wenxi (b. 1933)

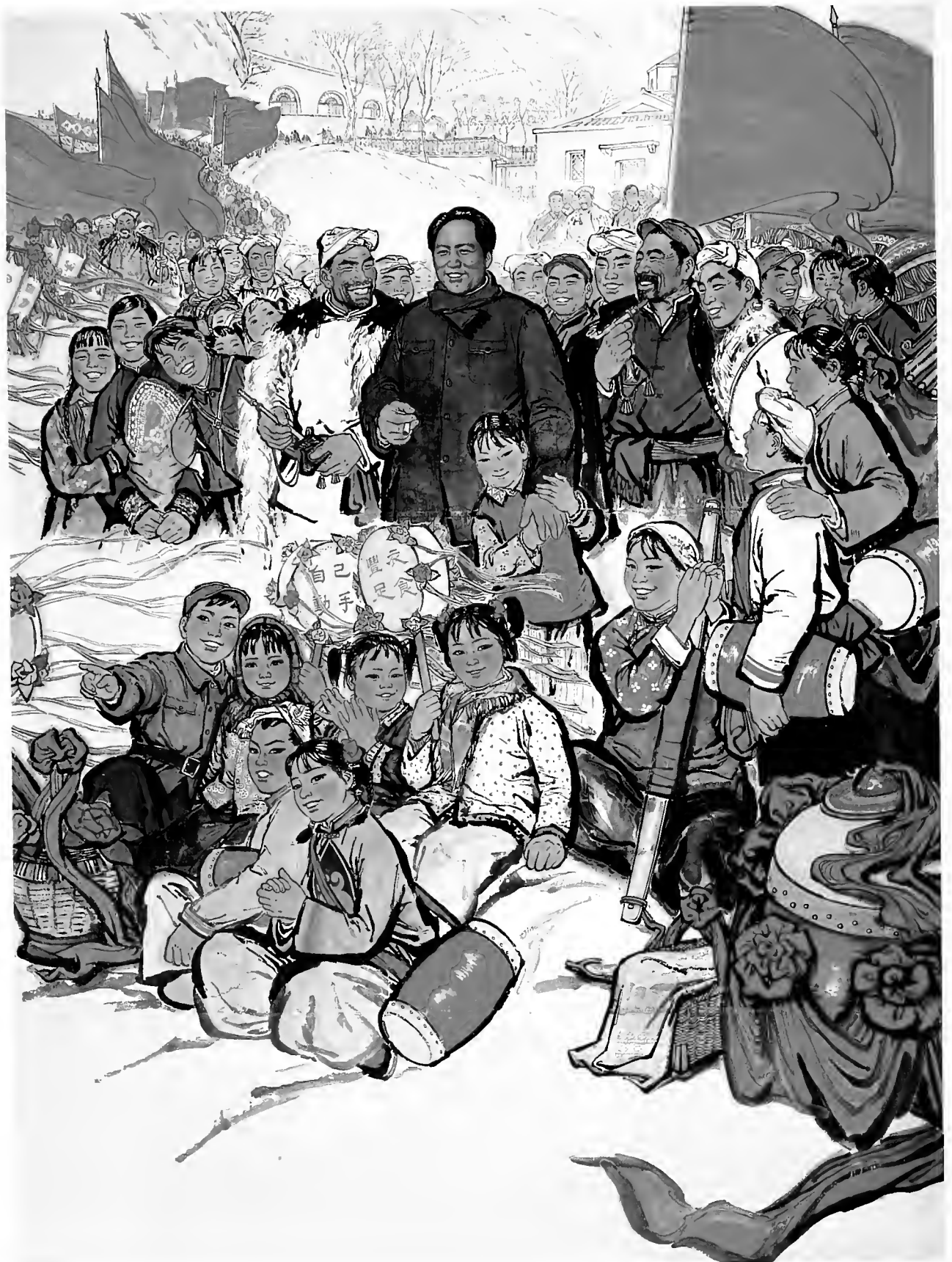
New Spring in Yan'an

1972

Ink and color on paper; 243 x 178.5 cm

China International Exhibition Agency,

Beijing



158. **Zhou Sicong** (1939–1995)

The People and the Prime Minister

1979

Ink and color on paper; 148.5 x 213.5 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



159. **Shen Jiawei** (b. 1948)
Standing Guard for Our Great Motherland
1974
Oil on canvas; 189 x 158 cm
Private collection



160. **Chen Yanning** (b. 1945)
New Doctor in the Fishing Village
1974
Oil on canvas; 138.2 x 98.3 cm
Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



161. Tang Muli (b. 1947)

Acupuncture Anesthesia

1972

Oil on canvas; 164 x 224 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



162. Zhou Shuqiao (b. 1938)

Willows in Spring Wind

1974

Oil on canvas; 122 x 190 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



163. Lin Gang (b. 1924) and
Pang Tao (b. 1934)
Eventful Years
1979
Oil on canvas; 166 x 296 cm
Museum of the Chinese Revolution,
Beijing



164. Chen Danqing (b. 1953)
Tears Flooding the Autumnal Fields
1976
Oil on canvas; 164 x 235 cm
Private collection



165. **Chen Yifei** (b. 1946) and **Wei Jingshan**

(b. 1943)

The Taking of the Presidential Palace

1977

Oil on canvas; 335 x 466 cm

Military Museum, Beijing



166. Wang Yingchun (b. 1942) and
Yang Lizhou (b. 1942)

The Yellow River Rours

1980-1981

Set of three panels, ink and color on
paper; 218.5 x 520 cm overall

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing





167. Cheng Conglin (b. 1954)

A Snowy Day in 1968

1979

Oil on canvas; 202 x 300 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



168. Chen Yifei (b. 1946)

Looking at History From My Space

1979

Oil on canvas; 185 x 353 cm

Collection of Lawrence Wu, New York



169. Luo Zhongli (b. 1948)

Father

1980

Oil on canvas; 227 x 154 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



170. **Mao Lizi** (Zhang Zhunli; b. 1950)
Hesitating
 Undated
 Oil on panel; 87 x 71.1 cm
 Collection of Lawrence Wu, New York



171. **Wang Huanqing** (b. 1944)
Night Revels
 1996
 Two panels, oil on canvas; 197 x 346 cm
 Private collection



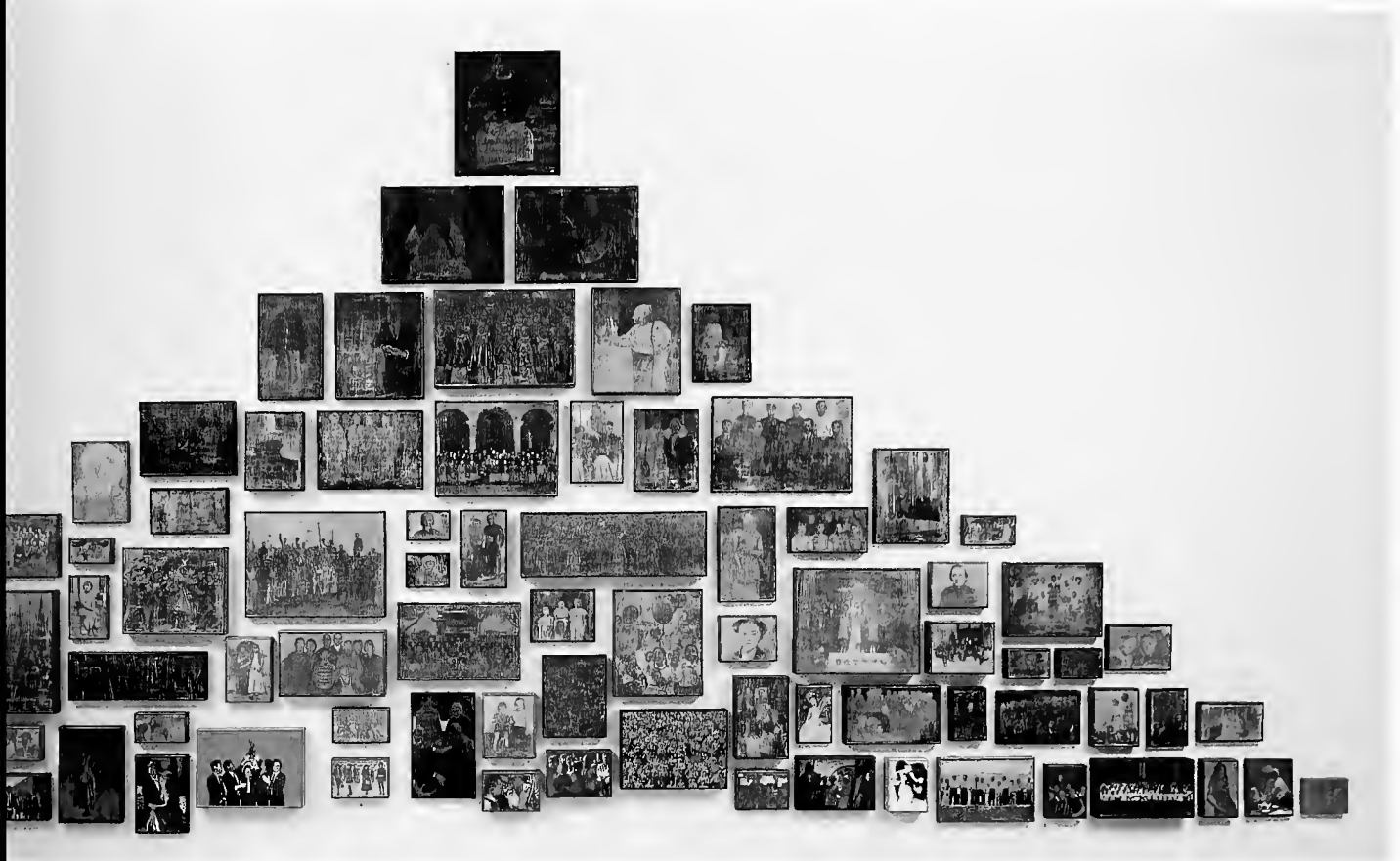
172. Zhou Changjiang (b. 1950)

Family Tree

1997

Mixed media; dimensions variable

Private collection



Transformations of Tradition, 1980 to the Present

Chinese Painting in the Post-Mao Era

Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen, The Ohio State University

As China reopened to the global community in the 1980s, Chinese art entered a renewed period of pluralistic development. A significant body of work in contemporary Western formats and styles, including oil painting, installations, and video art, has been shown in Europe and the United States in the 1990s. One might expect a shrinking globe to impose cultural homogeneity, but on the contrary, two decades of steady contact with the outside world have yielded an intense reconsideration of China's native artistic traditions. Painters of the last fifteen or twenty years have created remarkably varied work in *guohua*, China's traditional medium of ink on paper.

In the 1850s, as we have seen, ink painting was China's *only* serious painting. The twentieth century saw art in Western formats, mediums, and styles come to dominate the Chinese art world. Painting of the period between 1950 and 1980 was created largely within the goals and constraints of Socialist Realism. Artists who work in ink today are thus fully aware of alternatives to traditional painting. Three major trends within *guohua*: Literati-Expressionism, Neo-Traditionalism, and Post-Traditionalism, exemplify issues that remain crucial to the Chinese art world as a whole. Of particular importance to Chinese artists at this moment in history is the manner in which they negotiate the increasingly complex relationships between cultural or national identity and the global art world.

Artists today may use traditional painting tools and formats for purposes unimaginable a century ago; conversely, many artists have abandoned the traditional scroll or album format for Western frames. Modernist ink painters may be inspired by the drama of abstract oil painting, work such as that of Zao Wouki (Zhao Wuji). Others rethink the unfilled possibilities of various modern and postmodern schools of Western art. Their innovations move Chinese painting in new directions, and are clearly part of the hybridization of contemporary global art.

A small but significant group of painters oppose the mainstream with a singular purity, seeking to realize the highest aspirations of China's traditional painting in the contemporary world.

Important to all these artists, and to their audiences, is the belief that an art based on China's native traditions is vital today, and will remain so in the twenty-first century.

LITERATI-EXPRESSIONISTS

The Cultural Revolution caused unimaginable suffering to educated urban people. Many older artists, unable to bear the physical stress of repeated attacks by the Red Guards, and cut off from access to adequate medical care, died during the late 1960s and early 1970s. China, however, has a tradition of artists achieving greatness only in very old age, and some of the artists who survived emerged with a remarkable determination to fulfill their artistic potential.

Lu Yanshao (1909–1993), for example, had effectively wasted the first decade after the founding of the People's Republic of China attempting without much success to master the techniques for painting *lianhuanhua* (serial illustrations, or comic books, promoting new cultural, social, and political policies). Despite his efforts, he was labeled a rightist in 1957, whereupon he renewed his classical studies, focusing particularly on the style of the seventeenth-century master Shitao. In 1962 Lu was hired to teach at the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts, and that year he painted a beautiful album after the poems of Du Fu, showing a thorough mastery of the earlier artist's manner (see fig. 1). This album was confiscated from him during the Cultural Revolution, and part of it was lost. The government's return of the surviving leaves, after the end of the Cultural Revolution, was deeply moving to the artist, who may have assumed that they had been destroyed. A renewed engagement with his own earlier, more classical style may have inspired his breakthroughs of the 1980s.

Traveling Through the Gorge of 1986 is a dramatic rendering of small boats as they pass through the Yangzi Gorges (cat. 174). The broad bands of white mist, slashes of white river, repeating ranges of blue and orange hills, and shifting, sharply tilted ground planes, still owe a debt to Shitao, who painted similar subjects. Lu Yanshao's painting combines these elements in a uniquely vertical composition.



Figure 1. Lu Yanshao (1909–1993).
Landscapes After the Poems of Du Fu.
1962. Album leaves, ink and color on paper.

however, making effective use of his required studies in Western drawing to render water and depict small boats in a convincing manner. Compared with his more conservative album of twenty years before, the outline strokes in this painting are much more casual, but the contrasts between charcoal black lines for the mountains and pale transparent lines for the treacherous currents of the river are even more effective. The power of the painting is in the drama of its tonal and textural contrasts, however, making a landscape that simultaneously satisfies traditional interest in brush and ink and also looks strikingly new.

A second artist to create dazzling new effects within the traditional canon of Chinese painting is Song Wenzhi (b. 1918), a native of Taicang, Jiangsu, near Suzhou. A master painter at the Jiangsu Painting Institute since its establishment in 1957, he worked with Qian Songyan (see cat. 154) to develop a new landscape style suitable to the requirements of the period. One of a dozen artists sent on a sketching trip in 1961 that took them to agricultural, industrial, and scenic areas in six provinces, he recalls that the experience opened his eyes. The new work produced upon their return was appreciated both for its technical innovations and for the comparative naturalism with which it depicted the landscape. Rejecting this manner after the Cultural Revolution, he explored various stylistic possibilities until arriving in the early 1990s at the manner represented here. Four album leaves painted on Japanese paper reflect his years of observation of the landscapes in different parts of China as well as his technical mastery (cat. 176). Some leaves are titled according to season, others according to locale, but all exhibit brilliant understanding of atmosphere, light, and space. The gem-like quality of the color and surface and the delicate brushwork of the execution are characteristic of his old age. The delicacy of execution does not preclude dramatic variety.

Li Keran (1907–1989) was the master in his generation at depicting effects of light. His *Scenery of the Li River*, of 1986, sums up a lifetime's work (cat. 175). In depicting the famous river near Guilin, he establishes strong contrasts of black ink,

pale wash, and white paper. A light source is suggested somewhere to the left of the composition, but this is more of a memory image than an accurate transcription of anything seen. The brushwork has a certain roughness often seen in the hand of an aged painter, but the composition is bold and powerfully conceived.

C.C. Wang (Wang Jiqian; b. 1907) returns to the classical handscroll format in his *Landscape #880222 (A Thousand Peaks Compete in Splendor)*, of 1988 (cat. 177). Scion of a Suzhou literati family that traces its history back to a prominent Ming official and confidant of the artist Shen Zhou, Wang Jiqian first studied painting with the Suzhou literatus Gu Linshi (1865–1930) (see cat. 20) before moving to Shanghai to study law. In Shanghai he became a friend and painting student of the collector and painter Wu Hufan (1894–1968) (see cats. 41, 42, 147), who was also from a prominent Suzhou family. From intensive practice and close study of masterpieces in his own and friends' collections, Wang acquired a thorough grounding in the brush techniques and conceptions of the Yuan literati masters. In 1949 he moved to Hong Kong and then to New York, where he began to develop what he called his "Landscapes of the Mind," two of which are *Landscape #880222* and *Landscape #890222* (fig. 2). An important part of their compositional structure consists of ink dabs made with crumpled paper, which Wang then supplemented with the outlines, washes, and rows of trees from his traditionalist vocabulary. Although a master of texture strokes, Wang rigorously limits his use of them, challenging himself to create both forms and surfaces out of the ink dabs. The accidental wrinkles of ink thus become images of rocks and trees, according to his wish. Although he has clearly been inspired by Abstract Expressionism, the self-expressive potential of that American form of painting is here tamed by the literati aesthetic, which has shaped deliberately un-controlled wrinkles of ink into a carefully constructed landscape vision.¹

The artistic development of Zhang Daqian (Chang Dai-chien; 1899–1983), an artist from Sichuan who made his artistic career primarily in the Shanghai area before 1949, was parallel to Wang's.



Figure 2. Wang Jiqian (b. 1907). Landscape #890222. 1989. Ink and color on paper. C.C. Wang Family collection.

Intensely interested in even earlier painting, that of the Tang (618–907) and Song (960–1279) periods. Zhang traveled in the 1940s to the famous Buddhist cave-temples in the area of Dunhuang in Gansu Province, in order to copy the Tang and Song murals there. His skill at copying archaic paintings led to a successful career as a forger. Zhang, too, left China after 1949, settling for an extended period in Brazil, then California, and finally Taiwan. His time abroad corresponded with the heyday of Abstract Expressionism, and he, like Wang, began experimenting with chance effects, including splashing ink and color on the paper, as in *An Invitation to Rusticate*, 1966 (fig. 3). Also like Wang, he never permitted the random forms to remain purely abstract but turned them into landscapes. *Peach Blossom Spring* (cat. 178), painted in Taipei in 1983, the last year of his life, is a typical example of Zhang's late style, in which he returned increasingly to recognizable Chinese imagery. To the somewhat illegible puddled black ink and color, he added narrative elements from the famous poem by Tao Qian (365–427) describing an ancient utopia: the solitary fisherman in his skiff, the blossoming peach trees that tempt him to venture up the small stream toward the arcadian village outside of time and space.³

These artists grew up in an era of modern education. Lu Yanshao attended one of China's early art schools, the Wuxi Art Academy in Jiangsu Province; Li Keran was originally a student of modernist oil painting under Lin Fengmian at the National Hangzhou Arts Academy; and Wang Jiqian attended a Western-style law school. All of them showed and sold their work in modern-style exhibitions. But members of the traditional scholar-elite were still numerous in their day, and traditionalist painting and calligraphy were still practiced. Learning from older artists, in a traditional master-disciple relationship that might last for decades, was still an option. Even Li Keran, who began his public career in art as a modernist oil painter, was strongly influenced by an older colleague, traditionalist Huang Binhong (1864–1955), in the course of developing his own landscape style.

Furthermore, social and political dis-

order during the first half of the twentieth century enabled knowledgeable people to amass collections of fine old paintings. Collecting particularly stimulated Zhang Daqian's early technical development. By whatever route, all these artists achieved a style of landscape painting characterized by classical equilibrium and visual power, the intensity of which is magnified by its restraint. They have depicted recognizable mountains as envisioned in their imaginations, but the journey through those mountains remains ultimately the private experience of the viewer.

The quality called "loftiness" in literati painting theory refers to a perfectly balanced emotional distance, an art achieved through suggestion rather than domination, implication rather than explication. The artist reveals himself intuitively, but this self, however eccentric or individualistic, is rarely primal, raw, or messy, but instead is the result of conscious cultivation of character and knowledge. The scholar-official's ability to sail as if effortlessly through the administration of mundane though important affairs, showing the world only the cool surface of his personality, is a fundamental trait of the literati aesthetic. The viewer of literati painting is expected to bring to the work a similar self-awareness, to engage in a dialogue with the intellect and personality of the painting, as well as with its image. The varied styles of the landscapes in our first section, ranging from the substantiality of Li Keran to the orderliness of Wang Jiqian and finally to the flamboyance of Zhang Daqian, create very different openings for this dialogue, but all respect the viewer's ability to engage in it.

NEO-TRADITIONALISTS

The works of a second generation of painters, the Neo-Traditionalists, share similar qualities, but its artists are perhaps more remarkable for having grown up in a later time, when the literati culture and aesthetic was no longer to be found in society. Nevertheless, their work, which is even more varied than that of the older generation, succeeds in lifting viewers from their normal psychological state into something akin to a Kantian sense of the sublime.



Figure 3. Zhang Daqian (1899–1983). *An Invitation to Rusticate*. 1966. Ink and color on paper. Mei Yun Tang collection.

The landscape imagery of Arnold Chang (b. 1954), in his *Waterfalls in the Valley* (cat. 179), is not to be found on this earth, but the subtle beauty of his brushwork leaves one longing to visit such a place. Zhang Hong, inspired as a child by the work of Zhang Daqian, grew up in New York, and his construction of an identity as a Chinese artist has been very much an act of personal self-cultivation. The way in which these artists seem to have built so naturally upon the work of their predecessors may not seem remarkable until one considers that they have worked essentially in isolation from a living artistic community, engaging almost entirely in dialogue with the art of the past.

Shanghai-born Li Huayi (b. 1948) has developed a highly personal way of painting while living in California. Exposed to his family's collection of Shanghai school paintings as a child, Li began his study of painting with Wang Jimei, the son of Wang Zhen (see cats. 26–28). He later concentrated on Western painting, studying in the private studio of Belgian-trained Zhang Chongren. Only after completing an M.F.A. degree at the San Francisco Art Institute did he come to his own understanding of the art of Chinese painting. Li combines techniques of Song and Ming painting with fragments of observed landscapes to create fantasy worlds, or dream worlds, presented in an almost surrealistic fashion, as in *Red Trees and Wrinkled Cliff*, 1994 (cat. 180). His work rewards close scrutiny by drawing one into this imaginary world.

Chang Jin (b. 1951) has been engaged over the past fifteen years in absorbing the artistic traditions of his adopted

home of Nanjing in order to develop beautifully controlled, pale brushwork and tranquil imagery, as in his undated *Landscape/Clouds* (cat. 184) and *Landscape*, 1991 (fig. 4). His work is detached and cool, warmed only by earth tones, perhaps employed in homage to the seventeenth-century Nanjing monk Kuncan or the twentieth-century Nanjing painter Fu Baoshi. Chang's landscapes are imbued with an almost agonizing sense of distance, but at the same time they artfully lure the viewer into their perfectly distilled and peaceful worlds. In the orderly artistic universe of his pale, imaginary landscapes, Chang has in the past decade achieved a subtlety worthy of literati aesthetic aspirations.

Nanjing native Shu Chuanxi (b. 1932) entered the private Suzhou Art Academy in the early 1950s and graduated from the new school into which it was absorbed after the national educational restructuring, the Huadong Arts Academy. He then studied print making in Leipzig, when the People's Republic of China began sending its art students to Europe's Eastern-bloc countries. He graduated in 1961, and has served on the faculty of the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts ever since. In recent years Shu has devoted himself to *guohua* painting of various types. The most successful are his albums, which possess a remarkable formal beauty. In his *Album of Plum Blossoms*, 1995 (cat. 182), recognizable images from nature are rendered with a clean, cool, abstract beauty. Shu's work demonstrates his deep knowledge of the history of his chosen genre, including the work of Song dynasty literati plum painters such as Yang Buzhi, of Yuan painters such as Wang



Figure 4. Chang Jin (b. 1951). Landscape. 1991. Ink and color on paper. Collection of the artist.



Figure 5. Wu Guanzhong (b. 1919). West Peak at Mt. Hua. 1982. Sketch, ink on paper.

Mian, and even of the eighteenth-century eccentric painter Jin Nong. But he achieves individuality through his distinctive hand, with a particularly angular quality in his brushwork eliminating all traces of sweetness from images that might otherwise be too pretty. Shu paints in a variety of styles (see cat. 196), but although he is not a single-minded devotee of Neo-Traditionalism, his plum-blossom paintings are best viewed in a Neo-Traditionalist context.

Liao Lu (originally named Ruan Jinxing; b. 1944), who goes by his Buddhist name, is a native of Shanyu in Zhejiang Province but lives in Shanghai. He studied painting informally with older artists in Shanghai, particularly Zhang Dazhuang, Tang Yun, and He Tianjian (see cats. 43, 145, 146), and in the 1960s went to work at the Institute of Applied Arts, from which he has since resigned. Liao is a lay practitioner of Chan Buddhism, and his images of the most mundane but essential articles of daily life reflect Chan inspiration. Many of his subjects are traceable to the work of the eighteenth-century Buddhist eccentric Jin Nong, and his whimsy and rich colors

to nineteenth-century Shanghai school painters, especially the Buddhist Xugu (see cats. 14–16), but his imagery is very much his own. Liao's most frequent subject is a fuzzy soybean called *maodou*, a very simple but delicious food popular in Shanghai, whose somewhat odd surface texture he captures in different shades of bright green wash.

Seasonal Vegetables, 1996 (cat. 181) typifies the complexity of his artistic vision by its very format. After completing this handscroll, he sent it to the Shanghai Museum to be mounted in brocade, as though it were an ancient masterpiece. This very unassuming artist was motivated not by personal arrogance but by affectionate regard for the dignity of his subject, the lowly soybean accompanied by several other vegetables. Liao's *Seasonal Vegetables* partly shares both the subject and the sensibility of *Nirvana of the Radish*, a humorous Buddhist painting by the Japanese Itō Jakuchū (1716–1800).

The remarkable variety of work that may be found in the city of Shanghai, to say nothing of China as a whole, is immediately apparent on comparing the paintings of the above mentioned Neo-Traditionalists with the traditionalism practiced by Xiao Haichun (b. 1944). A native of Fengcheng in Jiangxi Province, Xiao graduated from the Shanghai School of Applied Arts in 1964, during the heyday of Socialist Realism, and became an award-winning designer of figural jade carvings. In recent years, however, he has turned to landscape painting. Like that of the other painters in this group, Xiao's work is strongly formalistic. But unlike the more complex intellectual and emotional resonances established by other artists of this group, whose work is more in keeping with the restraint of the literati aesthetic, Xiao's landscapes have a strongly physical quality. Indeed, his *Landscape Triptych*, 1997 (cat. 183), is one of the most aggressive pieces of traditionalist painting produced in recent years, perhaps bolder even than Jia Youfu's monumental Post-Traditionalist *The Taihang Mountains*, 1984 (cat. 188).

Xiao's huge triptych, which is modeled stylistically and compositionally on landscape masterpieces of the tenth or eleventh century, overwhelms the viewer by its sheer size. The classical technical



Figure 6. Zhao Wuji (b. 1921), 2.12.87. Oil on canvas. Collection of the artist.

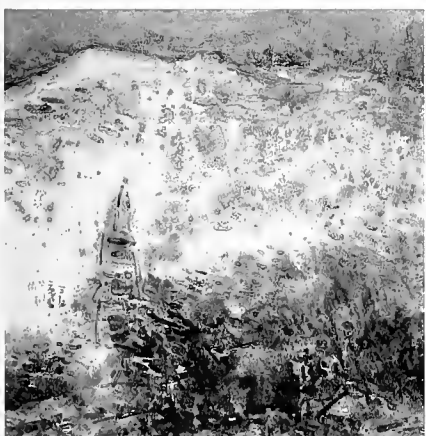


Figure 7. Zeng Mi (b. 1935). Snowy Landscape. 1996. Ink on paper. Collection of the artist.

and compositional references in this painting may recall the tradition of Dong Yuan and Juran in the tenth century, but, like the action paintings of the Abstract Expressionists, it is experienced first physically, not intellectually, for Xiao uses the ancient techniques less for their spiritual or intellectual connotations than for their formal qualities. Indeed, intellectual analysis doesn't take one very far here. *Landscape Triptych* assaults the eyes, not with the power of landscape but with the power of painting. The intent realized in this monumental work is to surpass the works of the ancient masters and the Socialist Realists, not by innovative imagery or technique but by unparalleled scale and intensity.

Xiao's triptych is typical of an important trend in contemporary Chinese art. Whereas other Neo-Traditionalists explore their roles in Chinese culture, ancient or modern, on a personal and private level, this work does not speak to the individual viewer but instead addresses an anonymous but (by assumption) ideologically sympathetic public. Through its use of compositions and brush techniques evocative of the golden age of Chinese landscape painting, it invokes the authority and antiquity of Chinese culture, thereby reinforcing its massive scale and commanding composition in order to overawe the onlooker. One might consider it an instrument of a new cultural nationalism, whose creators regard their audience not as individuals but as a collective, anonymous, passive target.

POST-TRADITIONALISTS

The most obvious commonality linking this final group of artists in the exhibition is that most were not trained in traditional Chinese painting, and most either reject or are oblivious to traditional techniques and standards. Many were trained as oil painters; others received their art education during the Socialist Realist period, and were indoctrinated in the superiority of the new *guohua* over the old and the dangers of adopting brushwork or subjects associated with the landlord class. Freed by this education from attachments to China's artistic past, they have sought to construct a Chinese tradition appropriate to their

own time. In their hands, Chinese tradition is transformed.

One of the best-known artists of this type is Wu Guanzhong (b. 1919). Trained primarily in Western painting at the National Hangzhou Arts Academy, Wu traveled to Paris for further study in 1946, where he became caught up in modernist currents of the time. Unlike earlier students, who returned from Europe to almost instant fame, Wu's career did not flourish in the 1950s, for his formalist ideas were not welcome during the period when Socialist Realism was predominant. In the early 1960s he was permitted to travel around China, which inspired a series of distinctive oil landscapes that gained Wu a moderate degree of recognition. It was not until after the Cultural Revolution that Wu began to emerge as a force in the Chinese art world. In the late 1970s he began publicly promoting the virtues of abstraction and formalism, both of which were officially discouraged during the previous quarter-century. Chut-sing Li has admirably summarized Wu Guanzhong's emergence at this time as a spokesman for new approaches to art.³ In particular, he published several essays on the question of abstract beauty in the influential official art journal *Meishu*, arguing that the Abstract school was an inevitable development in the West, and should not be condemned. Although he qualified his proposals by warning that Chinese artists should not blindly follow the West, he nevertheless believed that they should learn from the West, in order to enrich China's own art. He wrote enthusiastically of the abstract beauty manifest in many mediums in Chinese art, from classical garden design to Shang and Zhou bronzes.

Wu continued to work in oil but also began working regularly in *guohua*, which lent itself more to expressive spontaneity. He brings to his painting on Chinese paper his training in line drawing and Western-style color, thus making quite innovative and personal use of the medium. In the early 1980s he sometimes drew with a pen on Chinese paper, creating elegant contrasts between his spidery lines and rich ink and color washes (see fig. 5). The same travels that yielded his small landscape oils inspired many of his *guohua* landscapes, such as the felt-tipped



Figure 8. Nie Ou (b. 1948). Peasants' Happiness. 1995. Ink and color on paper, China International Exhibition Corporation.

pen drawing of Mount Hua (fig. 5), which in turn became a study for his painting *Sunrise on Mt. Hua*, 1983 (cat. 186). In transforming the scene from a monochromatic sketch to a polychromatic painting, he deleted the human figures who crowd the stairway leading to the mountain peak, thus altering a popular tourist spot into an image of early morning solitude and tranquility and repose. Perhaps the artist even intended to evoke Mount Hua's traditional identity as a sacred peak, an *axis mundi*. In this painting Wu used fine lines to define the mountain, then applied color in quite abstract and decorative ways, ornamenting the rocky gray cliff with dabs of pastel pink and green that can only remotely be justified as the effects of sunrise light. Only rarely working in a purely abstract mode, Wu Guanzhong has continued to paint the Chinese landscape, creating bold contrasts of line, blank paper, color, and wash that are particularly striking in the context of his time.

The sheer peaks of Mount Hua have attracted artists throughout Chinese history, inspiring many remarkable works of art. Communist print maker and painter

Shi Lu (1919-1982) produced his eccentric vision of the peak in his hanging scroll *Mount Hua*, 1972 (cat. 185). Irregular texture strokes, quite different from those of the past, add to the drama of his breathtaking scene. His image shows no path, making the peak seem inaccessible. Compared with Wu Guanzhong's somewhat more genial image, Shi's conveys the forbidding aspect of this extraordinary natural site. Shi is believed to have developed mental illness during the Cultural Revolution, and his art clearly abandoned the Cultural Revolution aesthetic at least five years before it was officially permitted (or reasonably safe) to do so. This work, while an immediately recognizable image of a famous place, is also extremely self-expressive. It deserves a privileged place as one of the headwaters of post-Mao Chinese painting.

As early as the 1960s Shi's conception of art comprehended formalist self-expression. In an essay not published until twenty years later, he wrote, "If a painting has brush and ink, its ideas are alive; without brush and ink, its thoughts are dead. If a painting possesses my thought, it has my brush and ink, if it lacks my thought, it will be a slave of ancient men's and nature's brushwork."¹ From at least 1965 until the end of his life, as he battled with schizophrenia, his work became increasingly eccentric. Harshly criticized during the Cultural Revolution but widely published and studied immediately thereafter, it became particularly influential in the early 1980s, just before he died.

A very different approach to the northern Chinese landscape and to abstraction is evident in *The Taihang Mountains*, 1984 (cat. 188), by a younger artist, Jia Youfu (b. 1942), which treats an almost identical subject. Jia, a 1965 graduate of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, reportedly vowed in 1978 to devote the next fifteen years of his life to making art based on the Taihang Mountains. The huge painting in this exhibition commemorates his fourteenth trip to the area. This dramatically beautiful mountain range on the Hebei-Shanxi border was also the area in which the Eighth Route Army saw combat during the Sino-Japanese war, and thus combines patriotic and historical interest with scenic



Figure 9. Shu Chuanxi (b. 1932). *Rhythm of the Orient*. 1994. Ink and color on paper. Collection of the artist.

grandeur. Jia's inscription itemizes the mountains' significance; he loves every peak, every stone, every blade of grass for itself, but above all he loves the Taihang Mountains because every peak resembles a memorial stele marking the site of the nation's struggle for survival.

Jia, who graduated and later began teaching at the same school as Li Keran, clearly absorbed that older master's dramatic use of light. He would undoubtedly have also been aware of the innovations of Shi Lu and his colleagues in Xi'an, and has gone far beyond them. In this painting his goal is a particular kind of compositional drama, one in keeping with the monumental theme, which he has achieved by covering the surface completely, using heavy ink and dark colors. *The Taihang Mountains* may be the most important example of this approach, which was taken up by many northern landscape painters. It is also typical of the work of many academically trained artists of this generation, who feel more comfortable with sweeping conceptual statements than with personal ones. Furthermore, the uprooting of traditional painting and culture left Jia and other academically trained artists inclined to look for inspiration in the sites of the Red Army's patriotic deeds more than in the art of the past. The results are unique in the history of Chinese painting, and indeed succeed in proving the power of China's national art.

An even younger artist, Chen Ping (b. 1960), creates gloomy images of north Chinese landscapes in a somewhat similar manner. Like other northern Chinese artists, Chen often relies on deliberately rough brushwork to create powerful effects. His work is disturbing in a unique way, however: rustic village dwellings, depicted in seemingly naïve brushwork, are virtually engulfed in bizarre, almost surrealistic color combinations, as in *The Countryside*, 1983 (cat. 190). Chen is considered a representative of the new *guohua*, and his painting is evidence of the degree to which the aesthetics, techniques, and purposes of *guohua* have been transformed.

At this point, we turn to a work that may at first seem out of place. *En Memoire de May* (cat. 173), a large oil painting executed in Paris in 1972, the

same year that Tang Muli painted *Acupuncture Anaesthesia* (cat. 161) in Shanghai, Qian Songyan painted *Sunrise in Yan'an after Snow* (cat. 154) in Nanjing, and in Xi'an Liu Wenxi painted *New Spring in Yan'an* (cat. 157) and Shi Lu painted *Mount Hua* (cat. 185). The artist of *En Memoire de May*, Zhao Wuji (Zao Wou-ki; b. 1921), was a classmate of Wu Guanzhong at the National Hangzhou Arts Academy. Born into a banker's family in Beijing but raised in Nantong, near Shanghai, Zhao entered the Academy at the age of fourteen, in 1935. Retreating with the Academy from the Japanese invaders, he graduated in Chongqing in 1941 and joined the faculty. The following year he organized a modern oil-painting exhibition, consisting of work by his teachers at the Academy and others, including Lin Fengmian, Wu Dayu, Guan Liang, and Ding Yanyong. After a solo exhibition in Shanghai in 1947, he departed for Paris.

Zhao was fortunate to arrive in Paris at the same time that many émigré artists from other parts of the world were settling there. He was also blessed with sympathetic colleagues who, years later, would write of parallels between Zhao, as a Chinese painter in Paris, and other modern expatriates—Picasso in Paris, Klee (not precisely an expatriate) in Germany, Einstein in the United States, and Freud in London—and who could appreciate the harmonizing of French and Chinese artistic ideas in his work. He soon became part of the Parisian abstract movement, and by 1952 was launched as a gesture painter, painting canvases that grew ever larger and more intense. *En Memoire de May*, painted in memory of his late wife, May, may be one of his most powerful. He painted it shortly after returning from his first visit to China in twenty-five years, and in the course of preparing a memorial exhibition of May's sculpture. He went back to China frequently in the following years, exhibiting there and in 1985 teaching at the academy in Hangzhou.

Zhao's importance in the Chinese art world lies in the remarkable combination of his cosmopolitanism with his Chinese essence, which can be seen in his oil painting 2.12.87, 1987 (fig. 6). Many observers, who find little reason to link

Zhao to contemporary China, have commented that as an artist Zhao is completely French. It is true that his reputation and artistic career are part of the history of modern French painting, but since the Cultural Revolution they have also been part of the history of Chinese art. He has repeatedly exhibited in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China, and more importantly, he is considered a Chinese artist by the Chinese art community. His work and thinking are unusually well integrated; as if bilingual, they can speak to French and Chinese audiences simultaneously.

Zhao's gift has been his ability to make his viewers, be they European or Chinese, understand that art can be abstract and Chinese at the same time. In his work the theoretical connections so often made between modernism and Chinese painting come to life, gracefully. To the Chinese art world this has given access to a potentially difficult form of painting, an art that was taboo and thus largely unknown throughout the Maoist period. Particularly for fellow graduates of the National Hangzhou Arts Academy, he provides material to fill a gap in their development, enabling them to become the modernists they might have been had China been at peace when they graduated from art school in the 1930s. Decades after being forced to abandon French modernism and adopt Socialist Realism, they are following their old instincts again as they try to become part of an alternative art history. A number of former revolutionaries, including Yan Han and Luo Gongliu, have experimented with Abstract Expressionism in their old age, going even further than fellow alumnus Wu Guanzhong in nonfigurative directions. But it is Zhao's influence on young Chinese artists, who never personally experienced modernist art, that is of greatest significance for the future.

A second diaspora artist who has had profound influence at home is of a younger generation, and his influence has come to China primarily as a Hong Kong phenomenon, even though he is no longer a resident of that city. Liu Kuo-sung (Guosong; b. 1932) was born in China, but taken to Taiwan as a teenager and educated at Taiwan Normal University, which at that time had the best art department

on the island. Trained in the recognizable styles of Post-Impressionist oil painting and literati ink painting taught at Taiwan Normal University, he plunged dramatically into abstraction during the late 1950s. After exhibiting in May 1957 with a group that called itself the Fifth Moon group, he began experimenting with mixed media, and by the 1960s he had developed a dramatic, highly abstract landscape vision. Most of his works from this period are paintings on paper in the scroll format, in an Abstract Expressionist style. The central role of landscape in his abstractions is made clear by his titles, such as *Mount Huang*, 1966 (cat. 193).

In the early 1970s, inspired by the Americans' manned lunar landing in 1969, Liu's work underwent another transformation. He began to paint circular geometric forms, combining these with landscape elements rendered in expressionist brushwork, an approach that he refined in the following decade, leading to works such as the remarkable *Midnight Sun*, 1985 (cat. 195). In this painting his experiments of the 1970s are fully realized on an enormous scale. Liu's combination of expressionist brushwork and crisply defined geometric forms has appealed to many younger artists in China, where he is widely imitated.

Wang Wuxie (Wucius Wong; b. 1936), working on a smaller scale, has made equally interesting juxtapositions of geometric abstraction and the softness of traditional ink renderings. Wang moved with his family to Hong Kong at the age of ten, and received his formal artistic training in the United States, but Chinese art is the thematic starting point of much of his painting. His *Cloudy Harmony*, 1978 (cat. 187), resembles a Song dynasty landscape that has been divided into quarters and recombined, or perhaps viewed through a kaleidoscopic lens, and thus fragmented into arbitrary rectangles of beautiful brushwork. The play between the apparently representational mountain forms and the composition's abstract structure offers a jolting visual experience.

Zhao Chunxiang (Chao Chung Hsiang; 1910–1991), like many other artists, including Zhao Wuji, Wu Guanzhong, Luo Gongliu, Yan Han, and

Hu Yichuan, studied at the National Hangzhou Arts Academy, from which he graduated in 1939. He taught in Taiwan from 1951 until 1955, after which he moved first to Europe and then to the United States. In the 1960s, like Liu Guosong, he began to experiment with splashing Chinese ink on paper to create Abstract Expressionist images, and also sometimes used acrylic paint along with ink. Withal, his work differs from Liu's in several ways, perhaps most notably in that his choice of paper sometimes creates effects of rich ink similar to those in *xieyi* painting, but even more purely formal in their function. One of his most dramatic paintings, *Calling You*, 1984 (cat. 194), is completely nonobjective, but a viewer accustomed to Chinese painting can detect a botanical image in the dynamic, densely layered brushwork. Although Zhao was one of Lin Fengmian's most promising students, his retiring disposition led to his relative obscurity in the Chinese art scene until he was very old, when he returned to Asia.

Young Cantonese artist Liu Zijian (b. 1956) has been strongly affected by the innovations of his elders. His *Abstract Ink Painting*, 1995 (cat. 197), exploits the contrasts created by using puddled ink and hard-edged geometric forms in the same composition.

By contrast, Shu Chuanxi, who also works in a Neo-Traditionalist manner (see cat. 182), experiments in modernist or even postmodernist *guohua* painting related to the manner of Zhao Wuji, whose early oils and prints offer Klee-inspired experiments with primitivist Chinese script. Shu's *Rhythm of the Orient*, 1990s (cat. 196 and fig. 9), which may be viewed on a table as a Chinese album, or in the gallery as a large installation piece, also shares Zhao's bicultural quality.

POST-TRADITIONAL FIGURE PAINTERS

The preceding essay, "The Victory of Socialist Realism," ended with Zhou Sicong (1939–1995) and the rest of the Chinese art world just beginning to reject the extremist version of Socialist Realism practiced during the Cultural Revolution. In 1982, with her *Coal Miners* ("Japan's Paradise") (cat. 199), Zhou went a

step further by adopting modern Japanese painting conventions for an indictment of Japan's conscription of Chinese laborers to work in the Manchurian coal mines. Here, a heavy network of fragmented lines overlays the huddled figures of men, women, and children to create a dizzying image of slow death in what may be one of the most powerfully depressing history paintings of the period. This ambitious image is the last of Zhou's public statements. Her constantly evolving artistic vision turned next to expressing the small, intense pleasures of life. Her *Lotus Pool*, 1989 (cat. 191), is so pale as to be almost ghostly. The subtle variations in ink tone, so beautiful and profoundly moving, are difficult to capture in a photographic reproduction.

A younger figure painter, Shi Dawei (b. 1950), is best known for history paintings that subtly transform the Socialist Realist canon, as in *Mao Zedong and an Old Peasant*, 1993 (cat. 200). Like Jia Youfu, he continues to focus on China's revolutionary history as his subject matter, at a time when this is no longer mandatory.

A rather different approach to figure painting, emerging among a group of painters in the south, especially in Shanghai and Nanjing, has by now become a nationwide trend. Lu Fusheng (b. 1949), who studied in the *guohua* department of the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts, painted one of his best-known works, *The Phoenix Hairpin*, 1981 (cat. 201), immediately after graduating. This album was commissioned by Shanghai People's Art Press as a set of seventy-two illustrations to a *lianhuanhua* version of a *kunqu* opera then popular in Shanghai.⁵ Lu, himself an enthusiast of traditional drama, worked with the lyricist to prepare texts to accompany the tragic tale, so that the book would effectively recreate the drama. Each picture is accompanied by a brief narrative and followed by one or two of the lyrics that would be sung by the characters in that particular scene. Some songs not originally included in the dramatic performance were composed for the published version.

The classical libretto revolves around the lives of a patriot poet of the Southern Song dynasty, Lu You (1125–1210) and his

wife (who was also his cousin) Tang Wan. The couple loved each other profoundly but were forced to separate by Lu's mother. For some time after their divorce, they met secretly, and Lu intentionally failed the civil-service examinations in order to avoid taking an official position in another city. Lu's mother was finally able to break up the relationship, after which he served as an official in many locations throughout the nation. Tang later remarried Zhao Shicheng, a member of the imperial family, and Lu married a woman named Wang. A decade later the lovers encountered each other at the Shen Garden in Shanyin, Zhejiang Province, and were again grief-stricken. Lu then composed a poem about their love in the song-lyric (*ci*) format and inscribed it on the garden wall. Tang responded with a poem of the same title. Eventually she died of a broken heart. Lu kept her constantly in his thoughts.

In the final scene we learn that Lu has retired to Shanyin after thirty-seven years of government service. He returns to the Shen Garden where he last saw Tang, and finds everything changed. Only the wall on which he wrote his poem to her remains untouched. Throughout the story runs the theme of conflict between the pacifist and the irredentist factions within the Southern Song government, which was ruling a diminished empire from Hangzhou. Lu was a passionate irredentist throughout his official career. The story's primary theme, however, is the traditional one of conflict between the protagonist's Confucian duty and his personal emotion.

Lu Fusheng's style here, showing no trace of Socialist Realism, was notable in 1981 when this work was painted, and marks the beginning of a new trend in Chinese figure painting. It is an antiquarian style, featuring the fine-line technique and bittersweet distortion associated with seventeenth-century painter Chen Hongshou and carried on by Shanghai school painter Ren Xiong (1823-1857), which Lu uses for expressive purposes and to create a feeling of mysterious distance. Indeed, without consulting the text of the story, his images are strange and difficult to interpret, somewhat like those of Shanghai school painters of a century earlier.

Several other contemporary *guohua* painters make ambiguity a more insistent part of their work. In particular, a group of painters who emerged in the 1980s in Nanjing as the New Literati Painters seem intent on pointing out how far modern Chinese society is from the ideals of literati culture. Repeatedly in China's history, Nanjing has served as a capital and a site of cultural florescence, but never for long. During the distant Six Dynasties period (317-589) it was home to the father of cursive calligraphy, Wang Xizhi, and the patriarch of Chinese figure painting, Gu Kaizhi. In the tenth century, as capital of the Southern Tang dynasty, it was the site of an extraordinary court painting atelier. As first capital of the Ming dynasty, its glory was temporarily restored, only to disappear soon after when the capital was moved to Beijing. In the twentieth century Nanjing was the center of a brief renaissance after the Nationalist government made that city its capital in 1929, at the conclusion of the military campaign to reunite China under a single government. Eight years later came the Japanese invasion and the Rape of Nanjing, and never since then has the city been China's capital. Overshadowed by the economic and political centers of the current era, Nanjing lives on its memories of ancient cultural glory. Thus, throughout the work of Nanjing painters, one finds a bitter tinge of nostalgia. Though they know the past to be irretrievable, they avoid the present.

Xu Lei (b. 1956), trained as a *gongbi* (fine-line, detailed) flower-and-bird painter, now paints subjects from classical Chinese material culture in a surrealistic manner, as in *Rocks and Chair*, 1995 (cat. 198), which features antique garden rocks, a white dove, painted screens, and an antique chair. Is this a formalist exercise or the strange subconscious imagery of a modern traditionalist? Xu Lele (b. 1955) paints rather naïve, almost cute, images of characters from classical novels, as in *The Characters from "Dream of the Red Chamber"*, 1996 (cat. 202), but all her figures seem enervated. Several other artists, including Shi Dawei and some followers of Zhou Sicong, have also adopted this naïve imagery and style of painting, although they often lack the irony that saves these examples from sweetness.

Traces of the style appear in the paintings of northern artist Chen Ping, and also in the work of Zeng Mi (b. 1935). A native of Fuzhou in Fujian Province, Zeng graduated from the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts in 1962; his teachers there would have promoted the Socialist Realist style of Fang Zengxian and Liu Wenxi. Thirty-five years later, much of Zeng's work is in a variation of the naïve style, skillfully painted to achieve an "innocent" unskilled effect (see cat. 192 and fig. 7). This intentionally naïve style, which inspired a host of younger artists, was pioneered by Fang Zhaolin (b. 1914), as in her *Loess Plateau* of 1985 (cat. 189). Zeng Mi's subtle use of gray ink, however, closely evokes Zhou Sicong's quiet self-expression in *Lotus Pool* (cat. 191). A similarly deliberate naïveté, also influenced by Fang Zhaolin, is seen in the work of Nie Ou (see fig. 8).

Wang Mengqi (b. 1947), who has recently moved to Guangzhou, retains his sense of alienation and relies less on naïveté than on obvious distortions for his effect. His *Lofty Sages*, 1996 (cat. 203), are rendered in a manner that indeed goes back to the ancient conventions of figure painting developed in Nanjing, but the elongation of the human form in his work has a highly ironic quality. Figure painting, in most ancient periods and in the Socialist Realist period, depicted exemplars of virtue, intended to inspire emulation. The inebriated melancholy of Wang's strange sages hardly fits this pattern. One might relate his work stylistically to that of the seventeenth-century master Chen Hongshou, or to that of Ren Xiong and Ren Yi, but in its present context its distortion might be seen less as a classicizing gesture than as a quizzical commentary upon the glorious national tradition. For, like Yang Lizhou or Zhou Sicong, Wang was trained as a Socialist Realist. His transformation of the nature of figure painting can only be viewed as a deliberate self-expressive strategy. Perhaps it is fitting that we conclude our story with this ambiguous image, in which questioning the past may serve to help Chinese artists approach the future.

NOTES

1. There are many books and essays about this artist. Two early books are Hsü Hsiao-hu, *Mountains of the Mind: The Landscape Painting of Wang Chi-ch'ien* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1970), and Lois Katz and C. C. Wang, *The Landscapes of C. C. Wang: Mountains of the Mind* (New York: Arthur M. Sackler Foundation, 1977). Jerome Silbergeld's *Mind Landscapes: The Paintings of C.C. Wang* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1987) may be considered the definitive study up to that point in the artist's career.
2. Two recent examples of the many English-language writings on Chang Dai-chien include Shen C. Y. Fu and Jan Stuart, *Challenging the Past. The Paintings of Chang Dai-chien* (Washington: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Association with the University of Washington Press, 1991) and *The Mei Yun Tang Collection of Paintings by Chang Dai-chien* (Hong Kong: Art Gallery, Institute of Chinese Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1993).
3. See the summary by Chu-ting Li in Wu Guanzhong, *A Contemporary Chinese Artist*, ed. Lucy Lim (San Francisco: Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco, 1989), pp. 35-36.
4. Julia F. Andrews, *Painters and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 294.
5. The six leaves shown here were published as pp. 8, 11, 26, 29, 33, and 55 of *The Phoenix Hairpin*.

173. **Zhao Wuji** (Zao Wou-ki; b. 1921)
En Memoire de May
1972
Oil on canvas; 200 x 525 cm
Musee National d'Art Moderne, Centre
Georges Pompidou, Paris





174. Lu Yanshao (1909–1993)

Traveling through the Gorge

1986

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

175 x 68 cm

Collection of Jingguanlou, Hong Kong



175. Li Keran (1907–1989)

Scenery of the Li River

1986

Ink and color on paper; 69 x 116 cm

Collection of Mr. Lui Kwok Man,

Hong Kong



176. Song Wenzhi (b. 1918)

Four Landscapes

Undated

Four leaves from an album, ink
and color on gold paper;

each leaf 38 x 15 cm

Private collection





177. Wang Jiqian (C.C. Wang; b. 1907)
*Landscape #880222 ("A Thousand Peaks
Compete in Splendor")*
1988
Handscroll, ink and color on paper;
45.7 x 198.3 cm
C.C. Wang Family Collection





已至道見以寫山水名爲歷自此子爲該秀圖
 照昨架生風柱自至生於新之而海一在微新而不
 文著尤難能也 庚子秋 已至道見生園主佩
 謝其 已爲國經手

178. Zhang Daqian (Chang Dai-chien;
1899-1983)
Peach-Blossom Spring
1983
Hanging scroll, ink and color
on paper; 209.1 x 92.4 cm
Cemac, Ltd.



179. **Zhang Hong** (Arnold Chang; b. 1954)

Waterfalls in the Valley

1996

Ink on paper; 96 x 185.5 cm

M. K. Lau Collection, Ltd.,

Hong Kong

180. **Li Huayi** (b. 1948)

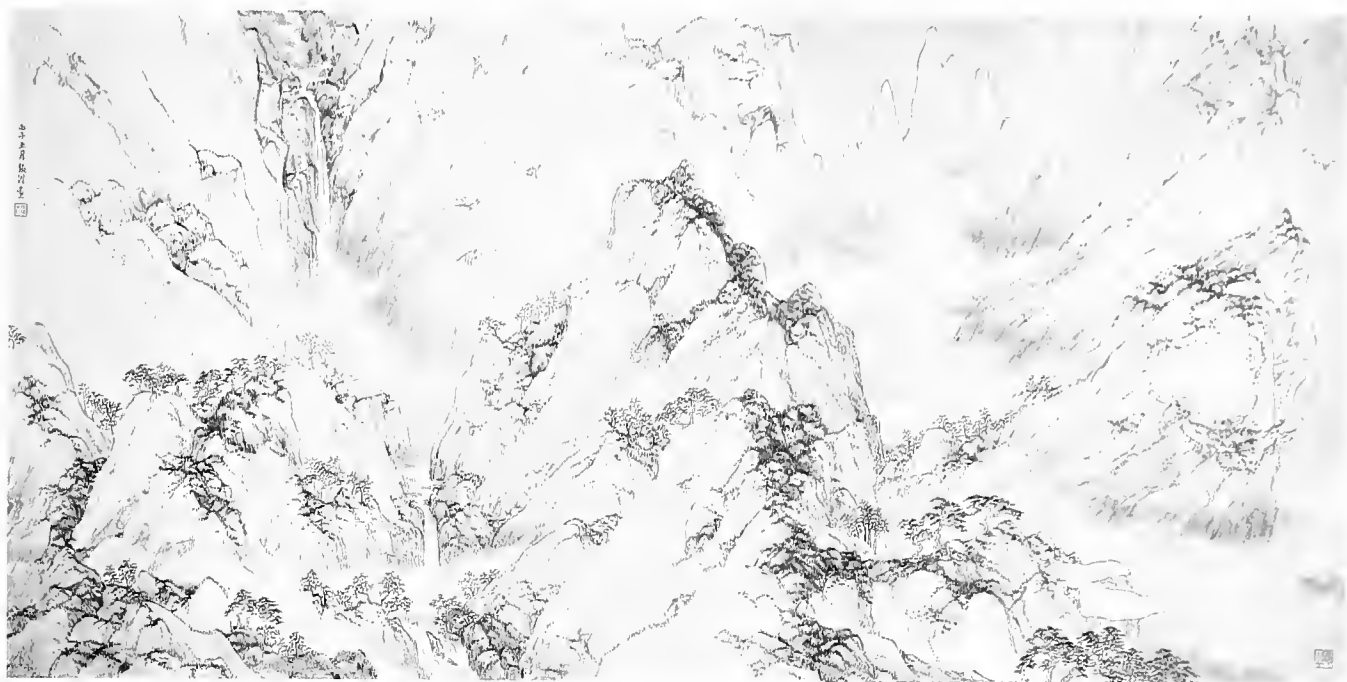
Red Trees and Wrinkled Cliff

1994

Ink and color on paper; 66.1 x 125.8 cm

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Liu,

Hong Kong



181. **Liao Lu** (b. 1944)

Seasonal Vegetables

1996

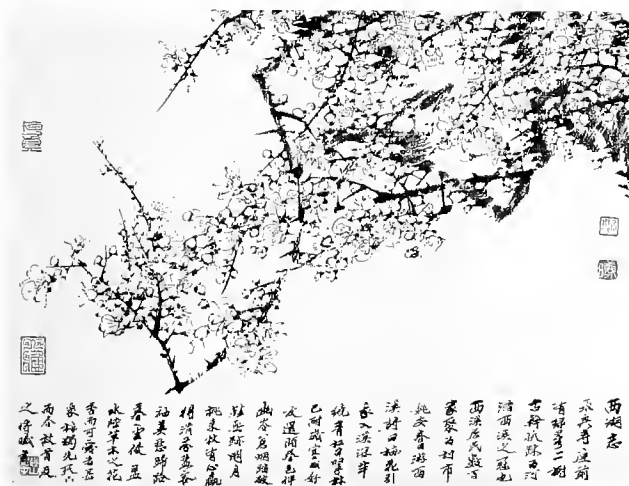
Handscroll, ink and color on paper;

33.5 x 267 cm

Private collection



Four leaves from an album of
twelve leaves, ink on paper;
each leaf 35 x 44 cm
Private collection



183. Xiao Hanchun (b. 1941)

Landscape Triptych

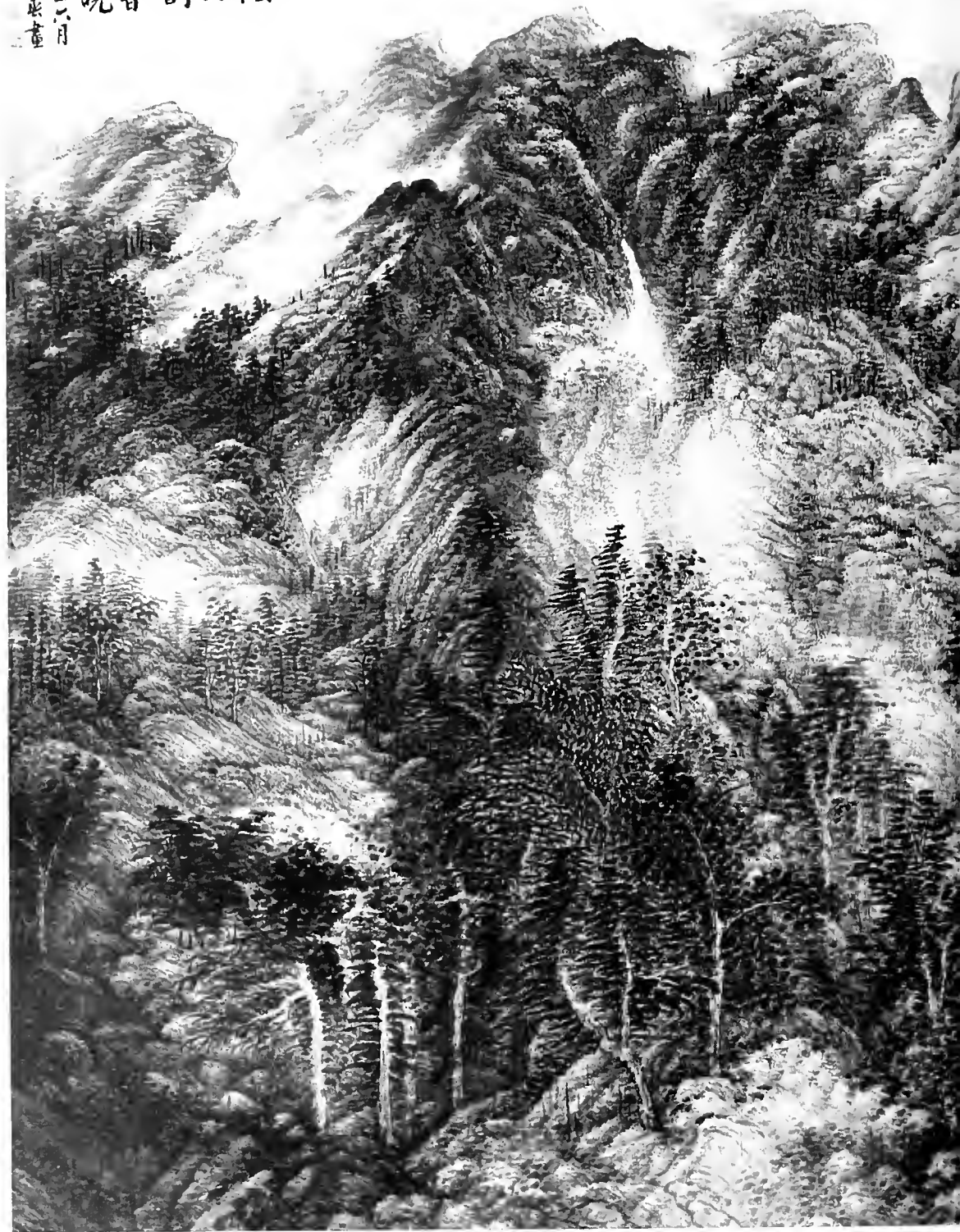
1997

Set of three hanging scrolls,

ink on paper; each 365 x 110 cm

Private collection

陰陽割昏曉
丁丑六月
海畫



184. **Chang Jin** (b. 1951)

Landscape/Clouds

Undated

Ink and color on paper; 99 x 62 cm

Private collection



185. Shi Lu (1919–1982)

Mount Hua

1972

Hanging scroll, ink on paper; 147.5 x 87 cm

Cemac Ltd.



186. Wu Guanzhong (b. 1919)

Sunrise on Mount Hua

1983

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

140 x 70 cm

Collection of Lawrence Wu, New York



187. **Wang Wuxie** (Wucius Wong; b. 1936)

Cloudy Harmony

1978

Ink on paper; 136 x 67 cm

Hong Kong Museum of Art, Provisional
Urban Council



188. **Jia Youfu** (b. 1942)

The Taihang Mountains

1984

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper;

200 cm x 170 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing

太行山 纪念碑 屹立在 革命战争 的烽火中 民族 的脊梁 就在这 不平 的 土地上 永远 矗立 着 我们 的 英雄 们 名字 刻在 纪念碑 上 永远 铭记 在心 间 太行 山 纪念碑 是 我们 的 骄傲 也是 我们 的 力量



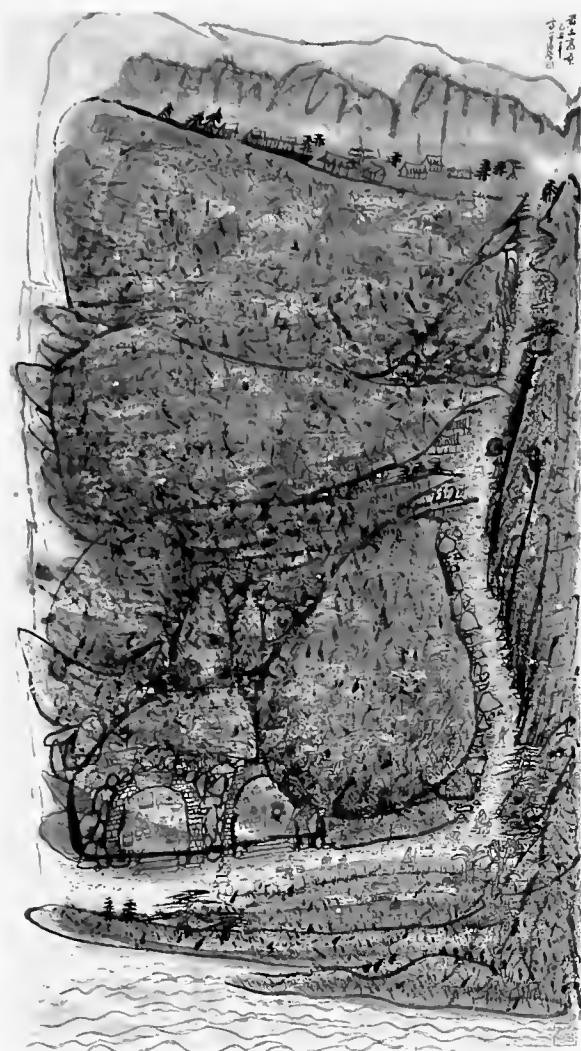
189. Fang Zhaolin (b. 1914)

Loess Plateau

1985

Ink and color on paper; 175.8 x 97 cm

Hong Kong Museum of Art, Provisional
Urban Council



190. Chen Ping (b. 1960)

The Countryside

1983

Ink and color on paper; 132 x 134 cm

Chinese National Art Gallery, Beijing



191. **Zhou Sicong** (1939–1995)

Lotus Pool

1989

Ink and acrylic on paper;

54 x 100 cm

Private collection

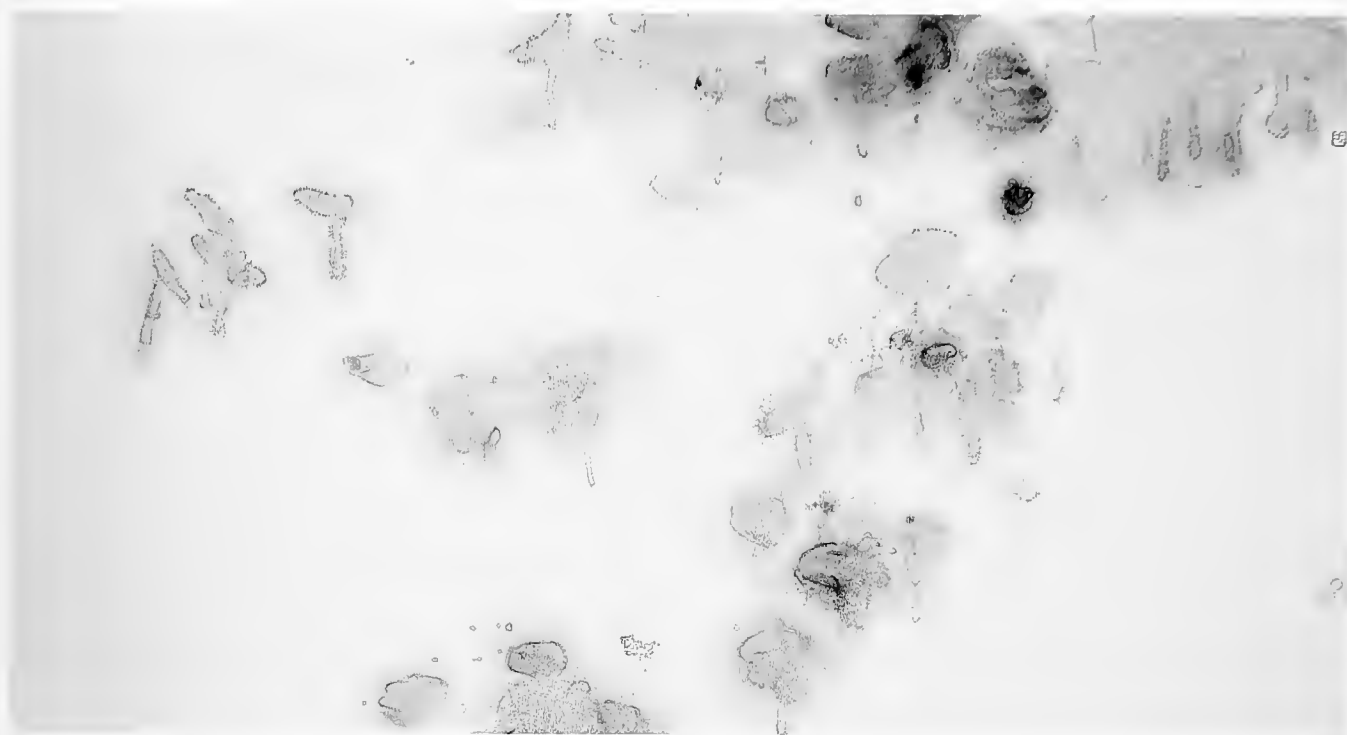
192. **Zeng Mi** (b. 1935)

Snowy Forest

1996

Ink on paper; 68.5 x 61.5 cm

Private collection



193. Liu Guosong (Liu Kuo-sung; b. 1932)

Mount Huang

1966

Pair of hanging scrolls, ink and color
with collage; 141 x 147.3 cm

Art Institute of Chicago, Oriental
Purchase Fund



194. Zhao Chunxiang (Chao Chung Hsiang;
1910–1991)
Calling You
1981
Diptych, ink and acrylic on paper;
183 x 177 cm
Collection of Mrs. Alice King, Hong Kong



195. Liu Guosong (Liu Kuo-sung;

b. 1932)

Midnight Sun

1985

Set of seven panels, ink and color
on paper; 184.5 x 632.5 cm

Private collection





196. Shu Chuanxi (b. 1932)

Rhythm of the Orient

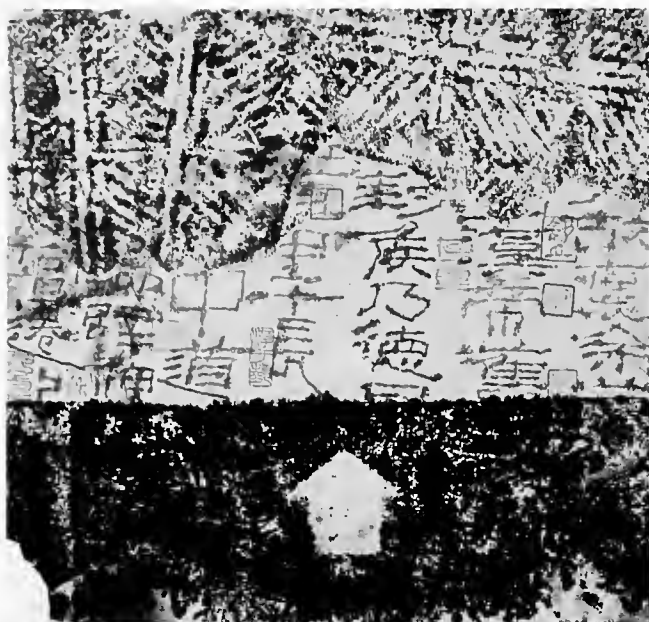
1990s

Four leaves from an album of ten leaves,

ink and color on paper; each leaf

27.5 x 28 cm

Private collection



197. **Liu Zijian** (b. 1956)

Abstract Ink Painting

1995

Set of four panels, ink on paper;

178 x 383.2 cm

China International Exhibition Agency,

Beijing



198. **Xu Lei** (b. 1956)

Rocks and Chair

1995

Ink and color on paper; 89 x 65 cm

Private collection



199. **Zhou Sicong** (1939–1995)

Coal Miners ("Japan's Paradise")

1982

Ink and color on paper; 177 x 236 cm

Private collection

200. **Shi Dawei** (b. 1950)

Mao Zedong and an Old Peasant

1993

Ink and color on paper; 150 x 122 cm

Private collection



201. Lu Fusheng (b. 1949)

The Phoenix Hairpin

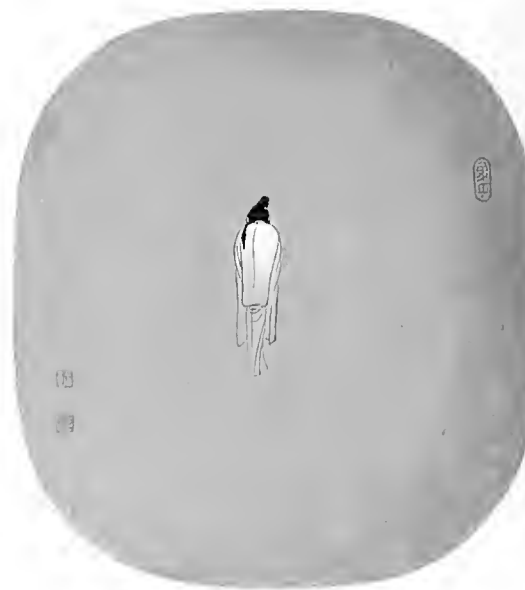
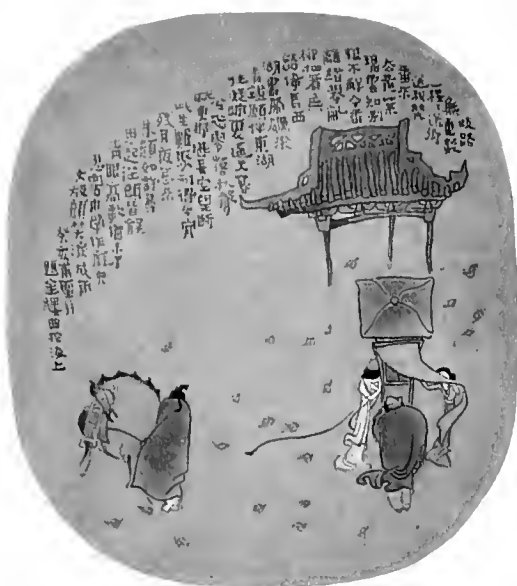
1981

Four leaves from an album of seventy-two

leaves, ink and color on silk;

each leaf 18.2 x 16.3 cm

Private collection



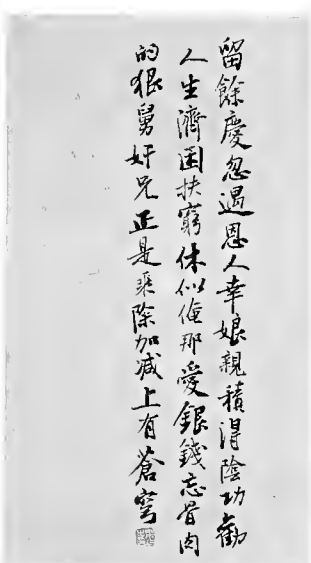
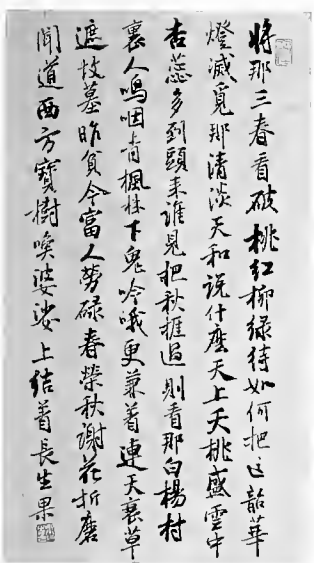
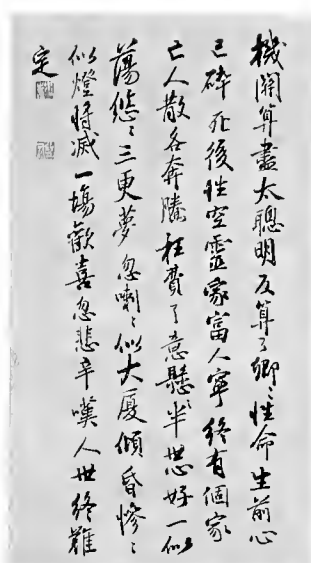
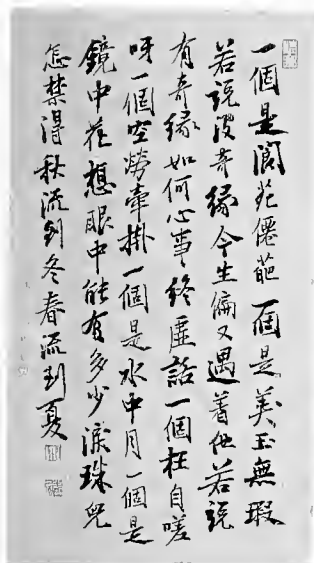
202. Xu Lele (b. 1955)

Ten Characters from "Dream of the Red Chamber"

1996

Four leaves from an album of
eight leaves, ink and color on paper;
each leaf 39.2 x 22 cm

Private collection



203. Wang Mengqi (b. 1947)

Lofty Sages

1996

Set of six panels, ink and color on paper;
each 233 x 53 cm

Private collection





204. Wang Dongling (b. 1945)

Calligraphy

1987

Set of four hanging scrolls, ink on paper;
each 320 x 180 cm

Courtesy of d.p. Fong Galleries, San Jose



森西武



森西武

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